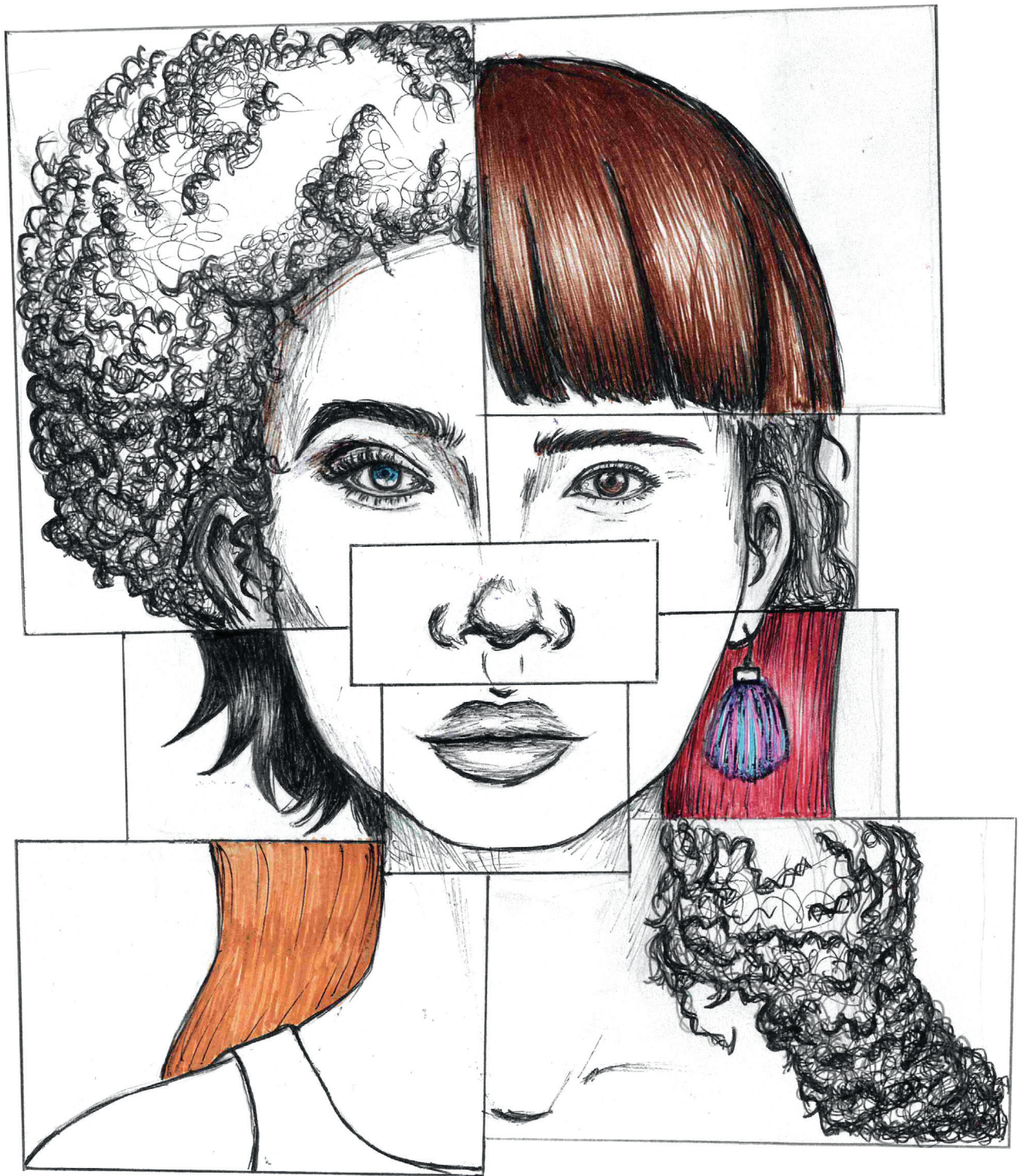


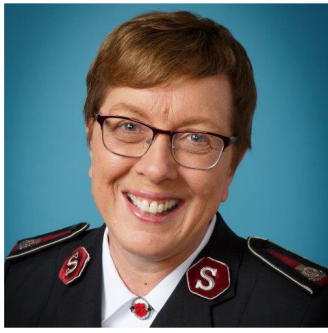
More Than Conquerors

IHQ WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDIES



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INTRODUCTION

DEAR SISTERS IN CHRIST,

I am so very pleased to present to you our third in a series of five international Women's Ministries Bible studies that are shaped around timeless topics essential to the Christian journey. I believe that engaging in these Bible studies and allowing God's Word to penetrate our hearts and minds will better equip and empower us as committed followers of Christ, passionately immersed in his mission in our world today.

In General Brian Peddle's Call to Mission to the international Salvation Army, he challenges Salvationists to 'be battle-ready – now!'. He writes: 'We must understand the urgency of "now". Our world needs Christ today, not when we have finished working on our plans! Despite all that needs to be done within our movement, we continue to fight the battle while we grow, strengthen our resolve and prepare for greater battles.'

It is in response to that challenge that this Bible study series, focusing on spiritual warfare, has been developed. Our chosen title, 'More Than Conquerors', reflects the confidence that is ours in Christ, as described in Romans 8:35-39.

These studies are an excellent resource for all who are determined to be battle ready, for as Paul reminds us in Ephesians 6:12, 'For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil'.

The 'More Than Conquerors' Bible study collection has been developed by 23 young women from different parts of our world where The Salvation Army has 'boots on the ground'. The writers are young women whose hearts are convinced and convicted that we are in the midst of a fierce spiritual battle. When we look at the world around us, there is a battle taking place in the spiritual realms over our homes, our cities and our nations. Through the power and strength of the Holy Spirit we can become aware of these battles and embrace a life lived in victory and not defeat.

Being 'more than conquerors' is not about pulling ourselves up by the bootstraps and trying harder, neither is it about coming up with the right plan to make something happen. It is not about us at all! Paul declares in Romans 8:37 that we are 'more than conquerors through him who loved us'. Being 'more than conquerors' is recognising Jesus is with us even in the grit of the battle and that it is only with his help that we pull through and keep pressing on. Jesus is true to his promises as he lifts our heads and helps us see beyond the giants, the obstacles and the trials that loom before us.

God does not abandon his people. People may disappoint us and forsake us, but God has promised in his word he will never leave us. He will stand with us. In Isaiah 43:1 God reminds us, 'Fear not; for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine' (*English Standard Version*). No, God will not leave us! In the storm, he will be with us. Through the fire, we will not be burned; the flames will not set us ablaze. He will be with us. Through the high waters, they will not sweep over us. He will be with us. Through the shaking and quaking of our lives, he will be with us. Through sickness and tribulations, he will be with us. God is by our side and God will bring us through to victory.

What is our God requiring from us as the 'more than conquerors' of the 21st century? To embrace God and be battle ready. We must fight the good fight of faith, remembering that the battle belongs to God, and not to us. The battle is the Lord's and we have been invited to join him. And he holds the victory! Jesus said, 'In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world' (John 16:33).

As recorded in Romans 8:31, 'If God is for us, who can be against us?' My friends, we have the power of God on our side, so join this battle with the courage and might of the Holy Spirit! It is the only way to demolish the strongholds of sin.

My deep prayer is that everyone who engages in these Bibles studies will experience the overwhelming presence of God surrounding them. The studies have been prepared by women writers but are not intended to be used exclusively by women's ministries groups. They are designed to be utilised in groups of all ages, cultures, nationalities, languages and genders. We are praying that God will use this resource far above anything we could ever dream or imagine.

May the empowering courage of the Holy Spirit enable those who receive the truths of these studies to storm the forts of darkness and bring them down!

May God bless and use these Bibles studies for his honour, his power and his glory.

May we bless him who loves us as we live in the truth that we are more than conquerors!



Commissioner Rosalie Peddle
World President of Women's Ministries

TRUSTING IN GOD

1 CHRONICLES 5:18-22

CAPTAIN VERÓNICA LIZETE BENGUI

1 Chronicles 5:18-22 tells the story of the Reubenites, Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh. These tribes had 44,760 combat men and waged war against the Hagrites, Jetur, Naphish and Nodab. They trusted in God and cried out to him in battle and they won the war because God was with them.

Trust in God is fundamental for all Christians; we are called to trust in the power of our Lord. His infinite love is the source of our triumphs.

Through his Son Jesus Christ we are victorious, and as his children, we must know that God expects us to trust him. We cannot go to battle with only our own strategies, experiences or intelligence; we need guidance and help in everything. The battle is not physical but spiritual and our all-powerful God will act at the right moment to defeat our enemies.

However, our pride and selfishness cause us to turn our back on God and to fail. We struggle on our own and depend on human wisdom instead of allowing God to guide us.

We all face struggles and difficulties at times, these situations are to be expected, because they reflect the words of Jesus who said: 'In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world' (John 16:33). We too can overcome our troubles through his grace. Scripture says: 'Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God' (John 1:12). As God's children, we are more than conquerors through Christ who gives us strength.

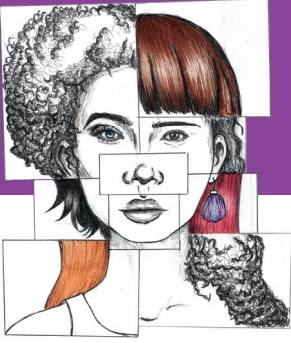
My dear sisters, if each one of us decides to put God first as we face adversity, storms, afflictions, disturbances or diseases, we must believe that he will do better than we can imagine.

For this reason, in every bad thing that may arise, do not worry, the Lord will intervene. When we seek God in prayer he listens. God does his work when we are connected to him and do everything according to his will. Our Father's desire is for us to be victorious in everything. But this victory is only for those who love him and who seek to live a life of holiness, determined to leave sin and accepting God as leader of their lives.

In God we are all more than conquerors because our victory comes from him.

In 1 Samuel 30 we read that David and his men arrived in Ziklag to find that the Amalekites had destroyed the city and taken their wives, daughters and sons captive. The men cried until they had no more strength to weep. But David strengthened himself in the Lord and consulted him, and so he went with his men to recover everything that had been taken from them. They defeated their enemies and took everything back.

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DISCUSS:

- * What can hinder us in our daily spiritual walk?
- * As children of God, who do we turn to in the face of adversity?

Through analysing this story, we see that the battle belongs to the Lord. When we consult him, he fights the battle for us. When we put God first, we have the victory and can claim back what the enemy stole from us. David asked the Lord: 'Shall I pursue this raiding party?' The Lord answered: 'Go, it is certain that you will reach them.' This confirms that God oversaw this battle and David conquered through the power of God.

Conquerors are people who understand the greatness and power of God in their lives, who decide to put God first in everything and are guided by the Holy Spirit.

When we face problems, who do we turn to for solutions? The tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh who had men capable of combat and trained more during the battle, cried out to God and he helped them. We can all be conquerors if we let God guide our steps and allow him to use us. His will is that we abandon sin and any hinderances. For this reason, God calls us to trust him and is willing to help us. Everyone should approach him and develop their relationship with God.



Dear Father, we are in your presence, recognising that we are sinners saved by grace. Forgive us when we forget that our victory is in your hands, and at times trust only in our own strength and intelligence.

Help us, lead us, guide us and give us strength and courage to keep in step with you and trust you to help us overcome the obstacles we face. We thank you in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

CAPTAIN VERÓNICA LIZETE BENGUI

ANGOLA COMMAND

Verónica is married to Ricardo and is the mother of four children. She is the corps officer at Luanda Central Corps and the anti-trafficking contact person in Angola.



HOW IMPORTANT ARE INSTRUCTIONS?

1 JOHN 5:3-4

LIEUTENANT DOMINIKA DOMÁNSKA

'In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith' (1 John 5:3-4).

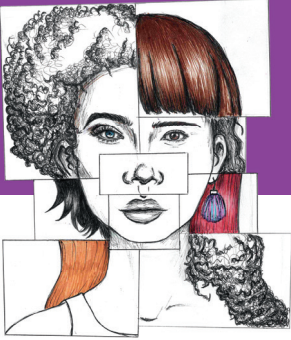
My husband and I love to cook and especially love baking. Oleg is an artist in the kitchen. Recipes are mere inspiration. He may find a nice name for a cake or a beautiful photo but the ingredients and proportions he treats as possible examples. When he can't find an ingredient, he replaces it with something similar or whatever seems more appropriate to the recipe. He thinks to himself: 'When I don't have milk maybe I will add cream. When there aren't any apples left, I will add bananas instead.' Sometimes he makes delicious pastries, sometimes he will create something outstanding, but more often the cake has a feeling that something is missing. It feels like he has not used the right proportions (sometimes he does not even read the recipe!).

The outcome is different if you follow the recipe, measure each ingredient exactly, bake it at the correct temperature and do not modify any of the steps. In the beginning, following the recipe carefully takes time and can dirty a lot of dishes, but it will produce the desired result. We get the cake we wanted. Over time, as we learn to make simple cakes, we will gain more confidence and skills to allow us to make more complex and spectacular cakes. And there is nothing more wonderful than baking a perfect cake to show your love to someone important to you.

For me, keeping God's commandments is like following a recipe for baking. The cookbook author doesn't want us to just buy the book and keep it on the shelf. He wants us to use it and to enjoy it, both in the baking process and in eating a delicious cake. God wants us not only to say how much we love him, he wants us to follow his commandments in the same way we follow recipes when cooking. This recipe for life for the whole world can be found in the Bible.

It is not enough that we only **tell** everyone we love him. Of course, this is the prime part of our relationship with God, but not the most important. It is very important to **show** with all of ourselves, with our whole life, that our love for him is not just words. And it is precisely by keeping God's commandments that we can show that we love God. The Bible is full of all kinds of ordinances and commandments. We have the Ten Commandments and the Book of Leviticus in the Old Testament. We know that we should attend church on Sunday, do not steal or kill. However, the coming of Jesus turned the order of the old world upside down. When he was asked, in his answer we see what the most important commandment is. In Matthew 22:37-39 we read 'Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself.'"

'KEEPING GOD'S COMMANDMENTS IS LIKE FOLLOWING A RECIPE FOR BAKING. THE COOKBOOK AUTHOR DOESN'T WANT US TO JUST BUY THE BOOK AND KEEP IT ON THE SHELF. HE WANTS US TO USE IT AND TO ENJOY IT, BOTH IN THE BAKING PROCESS AND IN EATING A DELICIOUS CAKE.'



DISCUSS:

- * Is there any commandment that you find extremely difficult to fulfil? Something that seems practically impossible to do in our own strength?
- * Consider if there is an area in your life where God wants you to show more love. Maybe you are not loving God enough? Or maybe you don't love your neighbour as well as you could?

Our faith is based on keeping these simple, yet difficult, commandments. The first commandment, love the Lord, sounds very logical to Christians. God is so important to us and we love him. We should love God with all our strength and, as the second commandment says, love our neighbours as we love ourselves. We keep mostly love for God in our hearts, but by loving him, love fills us and gives us the strength to act. It gives us the strength to love others. As it is possible to love God only in our hearts, it is impossible to love others, our neighbours only inside. When someone asks us for something to eat, we cannot just tell them, 'I love you and will pray for you'. Our job is to feed them. When someone wants to meet to talk, we do not send them off and leave them alone. Our job is to spend time with this person. By truly loving God, we will not leave someone alone who needs our support. We will show our love by doing good to others. And it will not be a sacrifice for us or something burdensome.

For those who have a relationship with God, it is not difficult to fulfil what God wants from us. We know that we already have the victory in Jesus Christ. Our faith in the living God makes us the light of this world. It makes it not that hard to follow what God wants from us and be an example to others.

However, what seems so simple in theory is not always so in practice. Maybe some commandments seem irrelevant to us or the challenge presented in the gospel seems too difficult to meet. Maybe our relationship with God is not as it should be just now. However, it is never too late to try and show God our love as much as we can. The Lord wants our love for him to grow.

Let us remember that God can help us solve all our problems. We can pray to him and ask for guidance.



Dear God, help me find pure joy in keeping your commandments and let my faith help me overcome all the opposites of this world and bring me closer to you.

LIEUTENANT DOMINIKA DOMAŃSKA

GERMANY, LITHUANIA AND POLAND TERRITORY

Lieutenant Dominika is a wife and mum of a beautiful girl. She serves as a corps officer in Warsaw, Poland. She loves to travel and read, especially Scandinavian crime novels.



FAITH IN THE MIDST OF THE BATTLE

2 KINGS 6:8-23

KIANNA SPICER

Life can throw many curve balls at us. There are always situations that arise in my life, whether at work, at home or with my kids, that often seem like a battle. A battle that can be at times overwhelming and lonely.

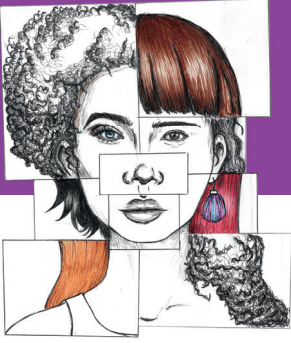
Elisha was in the midst of a battle. The enemy was surrounding him and his servants, and the servants were scared. However, Elisha had great faith in God, which never wavered. He could hear and see God well. This faith allowed him to see what others couldn't – God's protection through the battle.

"Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, "Open his eyes, LORD, so that he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha' (2 King 6:16-17).

Elisha did not pray that God would change anything in this situation. This is pretty big of Elisha. I don't know about you, but how many times have you been in the midst of a battle and you beg God to make it stop? It's the easiest way out. We want the hard, bad situation we are in to simply go away; we sometimes almost expect this of God.

However, Elisha didn't do this. His only request was that his servant would be able to actually see the reality of the situation: that God was protecting them within this battle. He wanted his eyes to be open to see that they weren't in this battle alone – God was with them, helping them! Yes, they were still in the battle, just like we will all still face battles in our own lives, but we don't have to face these alone. God is always with us.

'ELISHA HAD GREAT FAITH IN GOD, WHICH NEVER WAVERED. HE COULD HEAR AND SEE GOD WELL. THIS FAITH ALLOWED HIM TO SEE WHAT OTHERS COULDN'T – GOD'S PROTECTION THROUGH THE BATTLE.'



DISCUSS:

- * What battles are you facing in your life?
- * Are you the servant mentioned in this passage (struggling to see God's work within this battle) or are you like Elisha and have faith that God is with you?

Even though the servant couldn't see the work that God was doing to protect them at first, God was still there. How many times have we been in our own battles, and we look around and it feels as if we are alone. We are never alone. Even though we may not always be able to see what God is doing to help us, and we may not be as faithful as Elisha, God still helps! What a comforting thought.

Elisha wasn't afraid because he had faith. As Christians, we will still go through trials and battles, but because we are more than conquerors in Christ we have faith that God will get us through these situations. Faith reduces our fear. Elisha prayed to God and his prayers were answered. God answers our prayers too, even when we don't feel like it. How I would love to have a faith like Elisha!



Lord, we thank you that you are always with us when we are facing battles. We pray that you also open our eyes so that we may see the way you are helping and protecting us through these battles. Help us to have faith like Elisha so that we do not fear and instead know that we can get through any battles with you. Amen.

KIANNA SPICER

AUSTRALIA TERRITORY

Kianna grew up in the Army with her officer parents. With her husband, she leads the Liverpool Corps in Sydney. They have three beautiful young children. They love their ministry at Liverpool, living and loving amongst some very broken people and communities. They have a huge heart for the last, lost and the least – seeing people receive Christ and grow in their gifts that he has given them.



THE CONQUERING CHURCH

ACTS 1:8

LIEUTENANT ROSE SINANA



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

We are the disciples of Jesus Christ who had victory over death. He endured pain and suffering, was laid in the tomb and on the third day rose from the dead. Jesus conquered death and gave us victory.

In Acts 1:8, Luke is quoting a promise that Jesus gave to his disciples (Luke 24:47-48). As victorious disciples of Jesus, we must continue to be the light by witnessing about the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ.

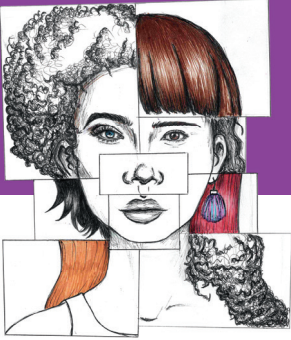
'WE MUST REMEMBER THAT WAITING IS SOMETIMES PART OF GOD'S PLAN. LIKE THE ACTS CHURCH, WE MUST WAIT ON GOD'S TIMING AND POWER TO BE TRULY EFFECTIVE.'

Jesus promised the disciples that they would receive power to witness (Luke 24:49) and the fulfilment of this promise is seen in Acts. If we want to become an Acts 1:8 church – the conquering church – we must obey and follow the leading of our Lord Jesus Christ and:

- Experience the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit and faithfully follow his instructions.
- Experience the power of the Holy Spirit. Be humble and dedicated to the mission through faith in Christ.
- Allow his power at work in us to form part of the mission which we are called to fulfil, being a witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Jesus instructed the disciples not to start the mission until they were empowered. The power of the Holy Spirit is not limited to strength beyond the ordinary – that power also involves courage, boldness, confidence, insight and authority. The disciples would need all these gifts to fulfill their mission.

Today, we are instructed through Scripture. Some Christians like to get on with the mission, even if it means running ahead of God, but we must remember that waiting is sometimes part of God's plan. Like the Acts church, we must wait on God's timing and power to be truly effective.



DISCUSS:

- * Are you ready to be an Acts 1:8 disciple and more than a conqueror?
- * How can we possess the qualifications of an Acts 1:8 disciple?
- * If you have these qualifications, how far have you conquered?

We are told how the gospel was to spread, geographically, from Jerusalem, into Judea and Samaria, and finally to the whole world. The circle began with the devout Jews in Jerusalem and Samaria before widening and reaching mixed-race Samaritans. God knows no boundaries when it comes to ethnicity, race, economic condition or gender. We should witness to our family, in our workplace, our school, our community and must ensure that we are contributing to the ever-widening circle of God's message.

It is our duty to be the Acts 1:8 church – the church of people who are more than conquerors. With greater faith, through the power of the Holy Spirit who empowers us, we can witness and change the world for Christ.



Father God, I know you have chosen me to be your follower. Thank you for the promise of the Holy Spirit, thank you for your power at work within me. Lord Jesus, give me the readiness to go out and witness to the world about you, and as I do your mission, I believe you will make me more than a conqueror and give me strength.

LIEUTENANT ROSE SINANA

TANZANIA TERRITORY

Lieutenant Rose is studying for a Diploma in Community Development and Social Work. She is married and has four children; a daughter and triplet sons. She serves as the Development Officer at Shukrani Training College, Mbeya.



FIGHTING LIES WITH TRUTH

JOHN 8:31-32

CADET REBECCA HOWAN

In this life, we can face all kinds of battles. Whether physical, emotional, mental or spiritual, it can seem like we're always struggling with something. A relationship breakdown, sickness in our family, anger towards someone who has wronged us, or struggles with addiction, anxiety or depression – the list can seem endless.

The number of people in the world facing mental and emotional battles seems to be constantly on the rise, and often these sit right alongside our physical battles. Feelings like anxiety, shame, fear and hopelessness have sadly become far too familiar, experienced by far too many of us, myself included. Anxiety has been at my side throughout a lot of my twenties.

So much of this internal fighting within our minds is rooted in believing the lies that the enemy uses to attack us. Our minds are a favourite target for the thief's mission to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10).

Lies like God doesn't care about you, and no one loves you. Lies that say this is as good as life is going to get, or you'll never be able to overcome your addiction. Lies that say every good thing in your life is about to come tumbling down, and God won't protect your family. Lies that say you're too damaged for God to use you, and you'll never be good enough to earn God's love.

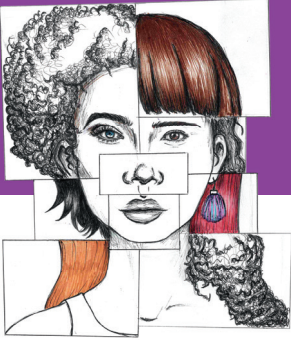
But there is good news – there is always good news! John 8:32 says, **'Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'**

God's truth has power and it can set us free from these lies that seek to take us captive. In the midst of our battles, it's so important that we focus on God, holding on to what he says about us and the truth of our identity in him. The truth that we are God's beloved child, and he cares for us. The truth that God is for us, he goes with us and ahead of us, and has good plans for us. The truth that we are saved simply through faith and believing in him, not through earning our salvation by works or being perfect. The truth that God desires to bring us life in all its fullness.

These wonderful truths are a powerful weapon against the enemy's lies.

To fight our battles, we need to find God's truth and hold it deep in our hearts so nothing can take it away from us. There is no magic trick to finding this truth – we find it simply by being faithful to God. In John 8:31-32, Jesus says, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'

'IN THE MIDST OF OUR BATTLES, IT'S SO IMPORTANT THAT WE FOCUS ON GOD, HOLDING ON TO WHAT HE SAYS ABOUT US AND THE TRUTH OF OUR IDENTITY IN HIM.'



DISCUSS:

- * What lies do you sometimes believe about yourself and your circumstances?
- * What things can you do in your life to make sure you are hearing and listening to the truth that God has for you, and not the enemy's lies?

Being faithful to God and holding to his teaching means reading God's Word, praying, being in fellowship with others and worshipping God. It also means being careful about what we allow into our minds and hearts, making sure what we're consuming is affirming God's truth, and not the lies of the enemy. When we are focused on remaining faithful to God, God's truth becomes a strong foundation in our lives, a weapon we can use against our battles and attacks from the enemy.

It can take courage and boldness to dare to cast aside the enemy's lies, which often play on our insecurities and fears, and instead believe what God says about us – particularly if we've believed those lies for a while.

But when our identity in God is firm and secure, when we believe and claim that the things God says about us are true, everything can change. Chains can be broken, lives can be transformed and strong warriors for God's Kingdom can be birthed, bringing God's life, joy and hope into this world.

Even when life is difficult, even when we still face battles every day – when a relationship is still fractured or when we're still tempted by old addictive habits – the freedom we experience from knowing God's truth in our hearts changes our outlook on everything.

God's truth doesn't just help us manage and cope with life, scraping by a little more each day. God's truth gives us complete freedom and brings us life in all its fullness. It helps us to not just win one battle by a small margin, but to be more than conquerors over all of life's battles and to have overwhelming victory.

No matter the battles we may face, praise God that his truth sets us free so we can remain strong and firm in our minds and spirits.



God of love, may you help us to know deep in our hearts the life-giving truths that you have for us, and may this knowledge set us free so that we can be more than conquerors over whatever battles we may face. In Jesus' mighty name, amen.

CADET REBECCA HOWAN

NEW ZEALAND, FIJI, TONGA AND SAMOA TERRITORY

Cadet Rebecca is training to become an officer in the Reflectors of Holiness Session. She loves to communicate and does this through writing blogs and singing as a member of national and local choirs.



DEFENDING THE FAITH

2 CORINTHIANS 10:3-5

LIEUTENANT SARA TARIQ

'For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ' (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

'OUR LOVING GOD HAS GIVEN US THIS ARMOUR TO SHIELD US FROM EVIL, BUT HE ALSO WANTS OUR LIVES TO SHINE FOR HIM.'

Prayer: Our loving Father, we come to you and give thanks for all you have given us. Please grant us with your Holy Spirit guidance and wisdom to understand this Bible study. We ask for this in Jesus' name. Amen.

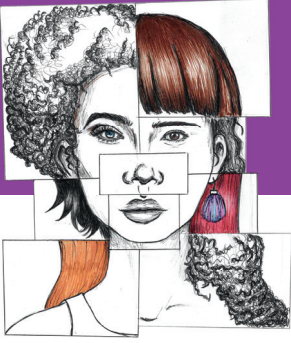
If people 'wage war' in the world today, what does that look like? Governments spend a lot of money on their soldiers and modern technologies to keep their countries safe. In peacetime soldiers prepare to fight the enemy and during war they use their training and talents to win the battle. In what ways do we sometimes wage war on someone in our corps or community?

Paul faced challenges from the people in Corinth and the title of 2 Corinthians 10 is 'Paul's defence of his ministry'. In what circumstances or challenges have you needed to defend your faith? I live in a Muslim country where Christians often face pressure from the Muslim community because our faith is different from the majority. Within a school, there might be only one Christian child, who may receive questions and challenges from their fellow classmates. How should we respond in such a situation?

'We do not wage war as the world does' (v3). In other words, our lives must be lived differently. We do not kill, slander, tell lies etc. We have to live our lives in such a way that we show people a better way.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus lays before us the type of life that he wants us to live. It begins with the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12). These are the attitudes and lifestyle that Jesus wants us to have. Read them and consider what each one means.

'The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world' (v4). In Paul's time soldiers went into battle in full armour. This was how they protected themselves. In Ephesians 6:10-18 Paul takes up this theme but talks of the Christian armour.



Read Ephesians 6:10-18 and think about the significance of each piece of armour:

- Belt of truth
- Breastplate of righteousness
- Shoes of the gospel of peace
- Shield of Faith
- Helmet of Salvation
- Sword of the Spirit

Our loving God has given us this armour to shield us from evil, but he also wants our lives to shine for him. People may not read the Bible, but they can experience Christ through us.

In what ways can we show evidence of God working in our lives? We can put an end to arguments by the way we live and act. People cannot deny the change that they see in us. They cannot say negative things if our lives are pure and good. We can be 'more than conquerors' if we read God's Word, live as Scripture encourages us to live and daily commit our lives to him.



Heavenly Father, we give thanks that as we accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, your Holy Spirit joins us as a guide and helper. Help us to listen to your Holy Spirit guidance and to follow Jesus so that we may glorify your name in the world. Amen.

LIEUTENANT SARA TARIQ

PAKISTAN TERRITORY

Lieutenant Sara was a teacher until she received her calling from Jesus and joined the Joyful Intercessors Session at the training college in 2015. She has served as the assistant corps officer and corps officer at Central Corps, Lahore, and now serves as the Education Officer at territorial headquarters, working on officer development courses.



KEEP YOUR SIGHT CLEAR

PSALM 18:39

LIEUTENANT JOHANNA SAMUELSSON

'You have girded me with strength for battle; you have subdued under me those who rose up against me' (Psalm 18:39 NASB).

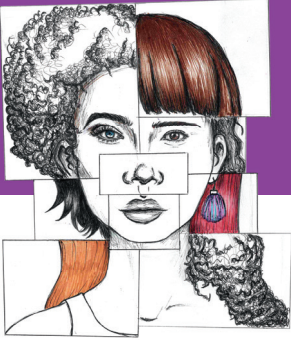
Last week I had a chat with a friend of mine, Helene. Helene described a situation at her workplace. She had been on sick leave the week before and a co-worker had told the staff group that Helene was lying and that she was not sick at all, that Helene just wanted to be home because it was too much work to do in that period. Helene felt very misunderstood and angry. I felt badly affected by her story and could easily recognise myself in it. I had in that period gotten into a conflict with some family members where I felt wrongfully accused, and after Helen's story I felt even angrier.

Then Helene asked me to pray for her situation and reminded me about a Bible verse, Ephesians 6:12-13: 'For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers ... of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms'. And that reminder really woke me up. For a while I had used my energy on bad feelings and thoughts against my family members and my sight was muddy, so when Helene told me her situation I couldn't see clearly. But when Helene read this verse, I heard what the Bible was telling me to do. And then Helene and I started to pray. We asked God for love for these people who had hurt us, for help to love our enemies (Luke 6:35) and we told 'the ruler of this dark world' to back off in Jesus' name because we have that authority (Matthew 12:29).

I am not very sporty, but I know some basic facts about sports. It is good to be aware of the other team's strategies. But that is not the focus. The focus should be on my own team's strategy and primarily how we can win the game. And I believe it is the same with our faith. Our focus should not be on our enemy, but it is good to know how he is acting. Our focus should always be on Jesus, he who has already defeated our enemy (Hebrews 2:14-15). When we have Jesus in focus then we can see clearly what is going on around us.

**'WHEN WE HAVE
JESUS IN FOCUS
THEN WE CAN SEE
CLEARLY WHAT
IS GOING ON
AROUND US.'**

Psalm 18 was written by King David when the Lord had saved him from his enemies and from Saul. When we read the story behind this psalm, we get to know that David had struggled a lot with both his enemies and with Saul (1 Samuel). But here David does not put Saul in the same category as the enemies, even though he had treated David very badly. I guess that is because he knew that the enemies were not flesh and blood. David is a role model for us in many ways, and this is one of the reasons, he could see clearly. He really had his focus on the Lord. He went to the Lord in all situations. In one story he didn't see clearly on his own when he saw Bathsheba but then Nathan, the prophet, made him aware of it and even this is an example to us, to surround ourselves with 'good' people who can help us see clearly.



DISCUSS:

- * Have you been in a situation like mine or Helene's? What happened? How did you handle it?
- * How can we help ourselves and the ones around us to be aware and ask Jesus to keep our sight clear? Do you have a Helene or Nathan in your life?
- * How can you practise the three lessons learned from David in your everyday life?

In Psalm 18 I can see three things that are helpful to keep our sight clear and keep our focus on Jesus:

- 1 *'I love you, LORD, my strength'* (v1) – First of all comes the relationship with Jesus, it is number one, our love to him. It is not the fight, the battle or the winning. No, everything starts in the love for Jesus. David is starting this psalm to declare his love to his Lord. And when he carries on, we can see that they have a close relationship where David is honest and opens up his heart. David loved the Lord.
- 2 *'For who is God besides the LORD?'* (v31) – David could have been arrogant and proud because of all his victories but he keeps giving God the glory. He describes God's greatness and power with enormous words which help us to understand God's holiness and our need to fear God. David keeps holding God high.
- 3 *'He trains my hands for battle'* (v34) – David shows us that God leads us, we can trust in him. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that 'God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear ... he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.' God prepares and equips us. Even Jesus prepared himself before his service, 40 days in the desert and in the end being tempted by Satan. It seems inevitable that we will be tempted or tested when we live with Jesus. God never tempts us, that's Satan's job, but he does test us. James writes that we should 'consider it pure joy ... whenever you face trials of many kinds ... your faith produces perseverance' (James 1:2-3). Paul means that we need endurance if we should have strength to fulfil the good fight (2 Timothy 4:7). God shows us how to handle it, through his Word. And who is his Word? Jesus (John 1:1). So when we stay close to Jesus we stay close to the victory. Then it doesn't matter what comes in our way. David knew that God was in control.

So, David teaches us at least three things which help us keep our sight clear; a love for the Lord, keeping God high and trusting that he is in control. Peter writes that we should be 'alert and of sober mind, your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith' (1 Peter 5:8-9). I needed Helene to remind me of what the Bible says. She woke me up. A reminder of what power there is in the Word, in Jesus. A reminder that the Lord has girded me with strength for battle, he has subdued under me those who rose up against me.



Jesus, I love you. You are worthy of all the glory. Thank you for being in control.
Help me to have clear sight.

LIEUTENANT JOHANNA SAMUELSSON

SWEDEN AND LATVIA TERRITORY

Lieutenant Johanna became a child of God when she was 18 years old. She is married to Emil and they have two wonderful children, Malte, 4, and Signe, 1. Johanna and Emil are corps leaders in Halmstad, on the west coast in Sweden. She says it is great to serve the Lord through the Army.



ENDLESS GLORIFICATION

PSALM 34:1-22

DEBORAH JESTIN SAMUEL

It is not easy to praise God all the time. David wrote Psalm 34 while he was in a cave. Even though he was in distress, he joyfully sang. David knew that there was something great in praising God. David was a humble shepherd boy who cared for his father's sheep. When God sent Samuel to Jesse's house to anoint one of Jesse's sons as the King of Israel, David was not on Jesse's sons list. David's own family neglected him but it never stopped him from praising God. David exemplifies why we should praise God at all times.

In today's world people take a lot of delight in worldly pleasures. Of course the world gives us some temporary happiness, but it is not everlasting. On the other hand, praising God gives us an everlasting happiness and that is the reason why David sang his cheerful song in hard times. The psalm says: 'I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. I will glory in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the LORD with me: let us exalt his name together.'

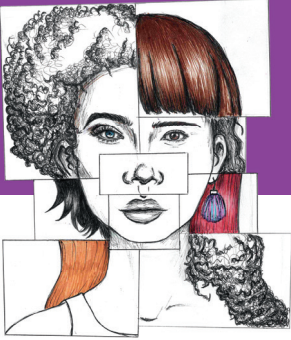
It takes courage to praise God during arduous times. Christian life is not a bed of roses; it is indeed filled with trials and temptations. Scripture advises in Psalm 34:5-6: 'Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. This poor man called, and the LORD heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles.' We must cling on to God during tough times. The following story helps us to understand this.

Corrie ten Boom was a Dutch Christian watchmaker. She was the first woman to be licensed as a watchmaker in The Netherlands. She also established youth Christian clubs for teenage girls which helped them to grow spiritually. She was so strong in faith and led a truthful life to God. During the Second World War, she was arrested by the Nazis and her youth club was soon banned. But nothing shook her faith in God. She still helped others by creating hiding places for refugees and honouring the Jewish Sabbath in that constricted situation.

Moreover, Corrie, her father Carey and her sister Betsie was arrested. Corrie lost Carey and Betsie in the prison but she still never stopped helping the needy and sick. Corrie had to withstand a lot of unpleasant punishments in the cruel concentration camp however she held strong in her dependence upon God. She was eventually released from prison and believed that whatever she did must please God. She wrote an autobiography, *The Hiding Place*. It depicts her life and the efforts she underwent to share hope in God at the concentration camp. Her story created tremendous hope in Christians all over the world.

Only when we taste the love of God in our lives can we live such a praise-filled life. Psalm 34:8 says, 'Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.' It motivates us to taste him. Psalm 119:103 tells us, 'How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!' This word spoken by David unmistakably reveals that he had tasted God so much. Delicious food can only be explored when we taste it. Likewise, tasting God is so important to know more about him.

'PRAISING GOD LIKE DAVID GIVES US HOPE THAT EVEN WHEN EVERYTHING IN THIS WORLD TURNS UPSIDE DOWN, THOSE WHO SEEK HIM WILL NOT GO HUNGRY.'



DISCUSS:

- * Do you still cling on to God like Corrie ten Boom even when life is not good to you?
- * What in your life is hindering you from glorifying God?

There is a big difference between hearing and seeing. The first sin to enter the world is through the sense of seeing. Eve, when deceived by Satan, believed the fruit was so good just by looking at it. Meanwhile, Psalm 34:8 clearly tells us to 'taste' God. Every baby is born with hunger which is satisfied only when they are fed with milk. As faithful Christians we are expected to hunger for God's Word and should be fulfilled by the Word. The tasting also produces the knowledge in Jesus that gives 'sight' in accordance with Ephesians 1:17-19: 'I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength.'

Praising God like David gives us hope that even when everything in this world turns upside down, those who seek him will not go hungry. Psalm 34:10 is such a comforting, promising verse that states: 'The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.' Whatever may happen, we must be assured that he cares for those who seek him. We are more than conquerors through Jesus!



Loving Father, please help us to praise you at all times and remove everything that blocks us from glorify you.

DEDORAH JESTIN SAMUEL

INDIA SOUTH EASTERN TERRITORY

Deborah is a member of the Booth Tucker Memorial Corps and accepted God as her personal saviour at a Salvation Army meeting. She is committed to serving the Lord through youth ministry throughout India. She represented the South Asia Zone at the Right at the Heart youth and children's leaders conference at Sunbury Court, London, in 2019.



JOY THAT LASTS FOREVER

ROMANS 8:37

CATHREEN SAHOTA



'In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us' (Romans 8:37).

As humans, we do everything for a reason. Our moral conduct is to encourage humanity, we earn money to have a comfortable life, we get married to create a family. But there are certain questions that I have struggled to find answers to:

- What is the reason for our existence?
- Is this life even worth it?
- Why do we get discouraged if this life is temporary?

Does the Big Bang theory provide us with rational answers? It states a sudden explosion gave birth to our existence. Therefore we randomly found an existence, our struggles are random, rationality is random and death is random. There is no reason for existence or death. Does the Bible have the reason?

Some people live a difficult earthly life, while others may be more fortunate or affluent. But after death nothing remains, fortunes nor struggles. But people who live in Christ, their struggles will be acknowledged and they will have everlasting life. Therefore, let us not get too distracted with troubles and tribulations, and instead focus on the everlasting joy that is found through Jesus Christ.

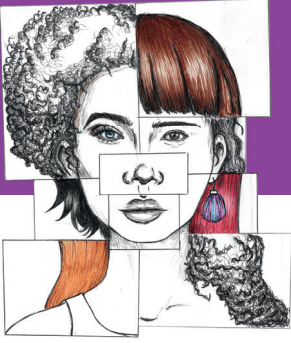
'To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne' (Revelation 3:21).

Being a winner in Christ isn't always easy, and there may be times when we feel discouraged or unable to keep faith, but the Bible tells us that we gain nothing through worrying (Luke 12:25) and having faith is the only way to have everlasting fruit.

When our expectations are not met or when things do not go our way, we may feel discouraged, but we must remember that our life is in the hands of our Creator.

'For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him' (Colossians 1:16).

**'BEING A WINNER
IN CHRIST ISN'T
ALWAYS EASY...
BUT... HAVING
FAITH IS THE ONLY
WAY TO HAVE
EVERLASTING
FRUIT.'**



DISCUSS:

- * What is God's plan for your life?
- * Are your personal plans and goals in alignment with God's plan?

When we feel like we've failed we can get stuck in a negative thought process. We focus on that one problem, ignoring or neglecting other opportunities. But we must see the bigger picture! Problems are often blessings in disguise and keeping faith is the key.

'Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go' (Joshua 1:9).

God chose Joshua to succeed Moses because of his faith and optimism. He trusted God's plans when the Israelites did not. Joshua's confidence was in God.

But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them' (Numbers 20:12).

Moses struck the rock twice with his staff when he was only asked to speak to the rock. Why did he use extra force? Did he doubt God? Earlier, in Exodus 17, the Lord had commanded Moses to strike the rock, so did he think that God was mistaken? We make this mistake too, of thinking that God doesn't always know the plan, but God is never wrong.

At times, we lose faith, but God still loves us. The Lord fulfilled his promise and he kept loving Moses. Keeping faith does not mean we cannot have doubts. Instead, we can present our doubts to God. If he answers, it will strengthen our faith in Christ. If things don't work out how we expect, we must wait. When the right time comes, everything starts falling into place. We need to believe that God will never give us more than we can handle. Nothing comes easy in life, and our faith is demonstrated through perseverance through trials and tribulations.

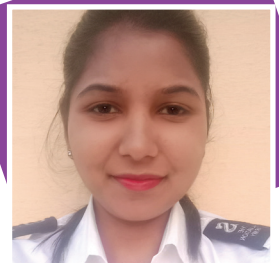


Lord, bless us and strengthen us so that through our faith we are more than conquerors and may know your everlasting joy. Amen.

CATHREEN SAHOTA

INDIA NORTHERN TERRITORY

Cathreen is a soldier of the India Northern Territory. She is an English language trainer and is also pursuing a postgraduate qualification in healthcare management.



THE WALKING, TALKING WORD OF GOD

HEBREWS 4:12

RONDA ATWATER

In a discussion with a friend of mine a while ago, she shared the thought that it may be impossible for a person to read the Bible consistently and not be changed by it. At that time, I remember thinking: *They could harden their hearts*, as did the Pharaoh of Egypt long ago when confronted with a command straight from the heart of God. *They could resist*, I thought. *They could denounce its truth*.

Today, I've reconsidered. Those defences seem to apply if the text that person reads is dead, written long ago, inspired merely by human questioning and insight. Hundreds of thousands of books exist today that have ended right where they began – between their front and back covers. They were probably relevant for a time. Maybe even for a few generations. Some have stood the ultimate test of time and have become history books studied in schools and universities, continuing to be read, mulled over and discussed by hungry students and clever professors. But no collection of writing can stand up with or against the Word of God.

Hebrews 4:12 begins, 'For the word of God is alive...' When something is alive, not only does it exist and breathe, but it also sees, hears and perceives. Jesus Christ, when he walked this earth as the living, breathing Word of God, saw the disrespectful buying and selling in the temple, and more importantly saw the hearts of those who reduced that space for their own greedy purposes (Matthew 21:12). He heard Mary and Martha's raw grieving voices when Lazarus fell sick and died (John 11:21, 32). Without seeing or hearing her, he perceived the woman with the issue of blood as she desperately clung to her belief that one touch of Jesus' clothing would save her (Matthew 9:20-22).

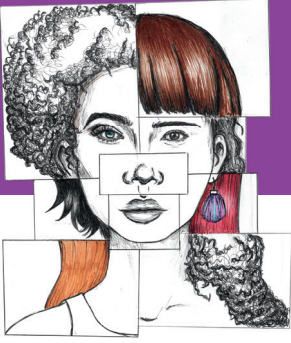
Good news! Jesus is just as alive now as he was then. He sees our circumstances, hears our prayers and perceives our heartbreaking disappointments and secret desires.

'ALIVE AND ACTIVE, GOD'S WORD IS PERSONIFIED IN JESUS CHRIST.'

Hebrews 4:12 continues on to say that God's Word is active. It moves just as powerfully today as Jesus moved through the countryside, cities and towns, drawing disciples, sinners and friends into his realm. Today, especially in an Internet age where false or shallow connections abound, the Word of God connects us to one another just as Jesus did at a Pharisee's dinner table (Luke 7:36-50) or on a mountaintop sharing the vision of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 5-7).

Alive and active, God's Word is personified in Jesus Christ (John 1:1); and through his gift of the Holy Spirit, it is also personified in his believers today (Acts 1:8). We are in an intense state of spiritual warfare against the enemy every second of every day. Because of that, God's Word is not only alive and active, but it is also activating – wielding a sharp, penetrating sword that thrusts truth and prompts a response.

Hebrews 4:12 continues, 'Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.' Jesus, the Word of God personified, was the walking, talking double-edged sword. Wherever he went, he drew forth reactions or movement among people. Church leaders became offended by his forward ideas and truth-teaching. Mobs, politicians and governors rallied against him. Innocent children and scorned women flocked to him. Men fell down



DISCUSS:

- * The verses leading up to Hebrews 4:12-13 focus on disobedience regarding the Sabbath, but observing the Sabbath is just one of several commandments that help us live purposeful, abundant, Godly lives. In what other areas is God graciously showing you that are coming up short of God's will for you?
- * The distinctiveness of a double-edged sword is in its ability to penetrate armor. What defenses of armor might you have constructed that stand to be pierced and penetrated by the alive, active, activating Word of God?

in worship before him. He caused an uproar wherever he went, even when he tried to keep a quiet presence (Matthew 8:3-4).

Being God, his very presence both activated a spiritual response and prompted a physical reaction. Jesus commissioned his followers to make disciples, who would then make other disciples, who would in turn make even more disciples, and so on, until there was a full and powerful revolution.

A double-edged sword is sharp. It pierces, penetrates and divides. It stands to judge us, not to harm us. It works to clear the thicket of self-righteousness and debris of sin from our hearts so that we can approach the throne of grace to which God beckons us: 'For we do not have a high priest who is unable to feel sympathy our weaknesses...Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need' (Hebrews 4:15-16).

As the walking, talking Word of God, Jesus was the essence of discipline. He made plain where people fell short, chastised the hard-hearted, wept for the unbelieving, empathised with the powerless and weak and invited all to receive God's gifts. We are forever recipients of Jesus' truth, chastisement, pity, empathy and invitations; and we are charged to extend these things to others.



Father, help me to trust the work that you are doing in me through the authority of your Word. Amen.

RONDA ATWATER

USA EASTERN TERRITORY


Ronda Atwater lives in Philadelphia and teaches English at a local high school. She loves to read, especially under an open sky or near a body of water. She cherishes the arts; the long, lazy days of summer; singing with a choir; and spending quality time with her husband Tyreese and son Kai. She journals daily and does her best to carve out time for rest and refreshment.



LIVING A VICTORIOUS LIFE

ROMANS 8:35-37

TERESA MAPONGA



'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.'

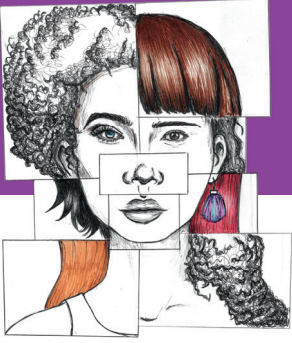
In Romans 8:35, Paul lists various evil things and questions if they can separate us from the love of Christ, before adding: 'For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord' (v38).

In Christ Jesus we are more than conquerors! For if God is for us, who can be against us (v31)? This fundamental truth affirms that God, as our father, is here to help us and protect us from any danger through his only son Jesus Christ. If he was willing to sacrifice his son for us, will he hold back anything else that we truly need?

We go through many challenges in life, but this is not intended to discourage us but to mould and strengthen us, to make us display the potential that is in us through Jesus Christ.

Sometimes we make mistakes that are not pleasing to God, but when we return to him through his son Jesus, we are restored and we are strengthened with his power and we become stronger in faith.

'IN CHRIST JESUS WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS! FOR IF GOD IS FOR US, WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?'



Matthew 16:18 tells us: 'And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.'

'Church' comes from the Greek word *ecclesia* which means a called out assembly or congregation.

The Church of God is made up of many individuals, each one strong in faith and love for the Saviour and above all guided and strengthened by the Holy Spirit who is at work within each one of us. The power of the Holy Spirit helps us to fight and overcome any temptation or enemy and to come together to declare as one voice the victorious life we have in Christ Jesus.

Who can ever separate us from the love of God? No one because we are more than conquerors in Jesus Christ through his death on the cross of Calvary. As the Church of God we need to be steadfast in faith and in the pursuit of living in the power of the resurrection; this will make us more than conquerors!

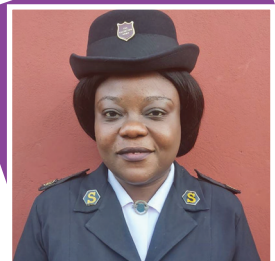


God, give us strength and bless our church as we pass through difficult times to conquer Satan and to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

TERESA MAPONGA

MOZAMBIQUE TERRITORY

Teresa is Secretary to the Territorial Commander and lives in Maputo. She is married, a mother of three girls and likes to sing.



DOING GOOD DEEDS – CONTINUALLY!

2 THESSALONIANS 3:13

LIEUTENANT MARLINA RENTI

'And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good' (2 Thessalonians 3:13).

One way of living according to God's truth is by doing what is good. Difficult conditions tempt us to prioritise our own interests over others. Nevertheless, it is amazing that there are still people willing to help, care and share with those in trouble or in need. At the Bethany Eventide Home where I serve, in Semarang, Indonesia, there are believers who regularly offer donations, even during the pandemic. They care about others even in difficult conditions.

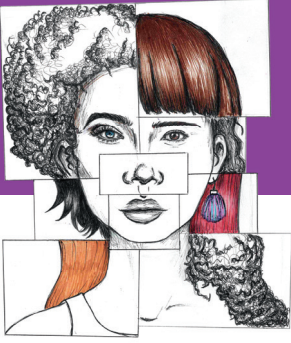
We see a similar attitude in the church in Thessalonica. The Thessalonians faithfully practised God's Word despite living under persecution from those who did not accept the truth of the gospel (Acts 17:1-9). Through their lives, God's Word progressed, glorified not only in Thessalonica but also in other cities (2 Thessalonians 3:1). However, people who were not happy with this progress tried making the Thessalonians abandon their faith. Because the persecution was unsuccessful in dampening their faith in Christ, their opponents tried another approach, influencing the mind and understanding of the congregation with teachings not in accordance with God's Word, especially the issue of 'the day of the Lord'.

'GOD'S LOVE, WHICH IS WITHIN US, ENABLES US TO FACE VARIOUS CHALLENGES OR DIFFICULTIES IN LIFE.'

It was said that the day of the Lord was getting closer, that it had almost started. Because of this misinterpretation, some congregations thought it was not necessary to work anymore. They became idle and lazy, abusing the generosity of the church by expecting help from those who worked as usual. Their lives were chaotic, busy doing useless things (2 Thessalonians 3:6, 11). The Apostle Paul called them to be disciplined, staying away, not associating with them and returning to work (verses 6 and 14).

In verse 13 Paul said, 'And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good.' The word 'you' refers to the congregations who were still living as Paul had taught them. They were not affected by false teachings, they lived to glorify God. They were reminded to do what is good continuously. Here they were asked not to slacken, become bored or stop doing their good deeds. Paul urged them not to be influenced by their circumstances, but to continue doing good. Their good deeds were loving, truly loving others in kindness and tenderness. They cared for the welfare, needs and spiritual condition of their fellow believers. They also shared their sympathy, helping those in trouble or distress. They kept working to provide for the needs of their family, and then sharing what they had to help those in difficulty (1 Thessalonians 4:9-10).

Living according to the truth of God's Word is not an easy thing to do. Challenges and temptations will come our way, trying to prevent us from doing good deeds. These challenges come both from outside and within oneself. Doing good deeds to those who are kind to us is easy to do, but it is different if that person is a



DISCUSS:

- * What makes us able to continue doing good deeds even when facing adversity?
- * How can we do good deeds when we ourselves are facing difficulties in life?

stranger, or even if they are our enemy. Doing good deeds to them is a difficult thing. Moreover, if we are badly affected by our own problems and difficulties in life, perhaps illness or suffering, these affect our desire and enthusiasm. We may even lose the desire altogether! This is where the spiritual battle takes place. God's Word says we must do good deeds to anyone who is in need, even if they are an enemy (Romans 12:20). The choice is ours; but those who stick to the truth of God's Word will be victorious.

Romans 8:37 says that those who are more than conquerors are those who are loved by God. Because of his love for mankind, God sacrificed his only son, Jesus Christ, who suffered, was humiliated and tortured and finally died on the cross to save humankind from eternal punishment. Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ and makes him their Lord and Saviour will receive eternal life (John 3:16). This promise is the hope of believers.

God's love, which is within us, enables us to face various challenges or difficulties in life. As it says in Romans 8:35, 38-39: 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ... For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' No difficulties and sufferings can separate us from the love of Jesus, but they will make us more than conquerors.

Do you love Jesus Christ, who loved you first? You can show this by doing what is good continuously! Look around you and decide what good deeds you can do today!



God, give us a heart that always longs to do your word by continuing to do what is good in the midst of the difficulties of life. Amen.

LIEUTENANT MARLINA RENTI

INDONESIA TERRITORY

Lieutenant Marlina, a Joyful Intercessor, serves at the Bethany Eventide Home in Semarang, Indonesia, where she is grateful to serve its senior citizen residents.



STANDING IN FAITH IN DIFFICULT TIMES

ROMANS 8:37

LIEUTENANT OKSANA BESPALOVA

'In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us' (Romans 8:37).

We all experience different circumstances, situations and emotions in our lives. We feel joyful when something turns out the way we want and we cry or grieve when the expected doesn't happen or something hurts us. Depending on what is happening to us or what we are facing, we can see the same Bible verse in different ways.

Until recently, I would have written my own very joyful interpretation of this wonderful verse from Romans 8, but a month ago I experienced something I could never have imagined.

I was taken by ambulance to the hospital, half-dead and received a terrible diagnosis followed by a lot of tears and then silence from God (as it seemed to me) during long days of waiting to find out what would happen.

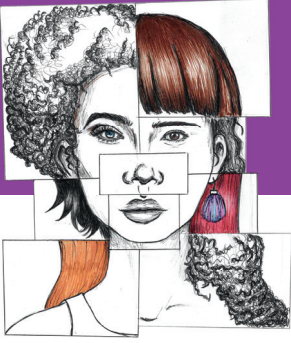
Today I am still being treated and examined by doctors, but the situation is more stable and I am getting better. In connection with what has happened to me and what I have been living with, I want to address those who are living in despair or those who are sad or in a difficult situation.

In our study passage, we clearly see that we are conquerors only by the power of the loving Lord. When you feel bad, you may not feel God's love, power or presence. That's exactly what happened to me. In an instant, I lost the revelations of God which inspired me in ministry, and I no longer had prayer in the power of the Holy Spirit. I felt like I was alone with my pain and fear. Nothing like this had ever happened to me before.

I repented in 2001 and became a soldier in 2002. I loved God, and Jesus completely changed my life. I always sincerely served him and saw how the Holy Spirit led me. I loved my ministry as an officer, the people I served and my family. I liked to preach and I enjoyed serving people with my spiritual gifts.

Suddenly my life was very different. The devil invaded my thoughts; he placed on my mind that my ministry was the cause, that I should just leave everything. He reminded me that I had a good profession before officership, and how much I had achieved in it, that I just need to do my old job to prevent such attacks. But during this period of darkness, I told myself that this is not right. I reminded myself how much I loved my ministry, what fruits God had given me and how the Lord had called me to officership. I was aware that the devil was attacking me because he did not want to allow me to continue in my ministry to the Lord.

'HE LOVES US! IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMIND OURSELVES OF THIS IN DIFFICULT TIMES.'



'Through him who loved us' – he loves us! It is important to remind ourselves of this in difficult times. If you don't *feel* that he loves you, it doesn't mean that he doesn't love you. He is present. Jesus Christ is with you now. Accept it by faith, through his word, and soon you will rejoice that you did not turn away from his divine love. You will understand that he did not go anywhere, he did not leave you even for a second and did not stop loving you. God is always with us and worries and cries with us. There is no change in the nature of Almighty God, and he is always and forever the same.

Dear reader, if you do not feel like a conqueror today, stand in faith, as you were taught, do not give up, do not listen to the devil, remember all the blessings from God, reflect on who God Almighty is and know that the day will come when you will understand what all this was for. You will become stronger. You will become better in God. With courage and faith, you will say: I am more than a conqueror in him. Amen!

If you do not feel God's love, then name at least two bright moments of God's answer to prayer. Remember what you felt, what you said to God. Take time to say it aloud.

Think about the quality of God that you need most right now. Maybe it is a healer, a father, a comforter, a Saviour, a forgiver, a loving God, etc. Ask him to offer up that quality today.

Do the things that have always inspired you to grow spiritually: listen to songs of praise and worship, admire nature, call someone who inspires you, read the Bible, pray about what you feel, voice your concerns.

If you feel spiritually well today and inspired, then think about who you can support in God and share your mood. Don't be greedy or lazy. Support others!

Also think about what you need to do so that in a moment of trial or difficulty, you do not burn spiritually. Write it down and read it when you need it most. Make a list of your favourite Bible verses, or write down all the most precious God moments, list a few songs of praise that you can listen to and reflect on. Let it be something personal and important to you.



Lord, thank you for being a loving, unchanging and victorious God! Support those who are sad. Thank you for those who are happy. We love you and always praise you. Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

LIEUTENANT OKSANA BESPALOVA

RUSSIA COMMAND

Oksana and her husband serve in Rostov-on-Don as corps officers. They have two children aged 4 and 13.



AMID THE STORMS, THERE IS PEACE

ROMANS 8:37

TEPHANIE HAUGHTON

Readingacts.com says, 'While there is no clear reason why Paul wrote the book of Romans, there is an agreement that the purpose was to set forth Paul's theology of Salvation by Grace in clear terms. In Romans 8:37, he makes the confident statement, "In all things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."'

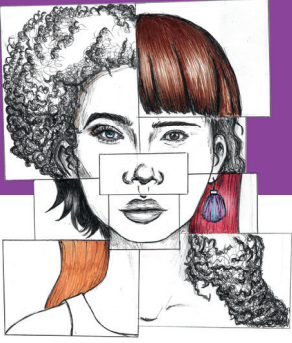
Despite the many challenges experienced, Paul was victorious. How did this happen? How could he feel such assurance? In earlier verses Paul spoke of facing troubles, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger and a sword. Studies have shown that out of all the apostles, Paul was the most abused. He faced beatings, imprisonments and even riots. Acts 9:15-16 tells us: 'This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name,' yet Paul never forgot the importance and value of devoting oneself to prayer: 'In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God' (Romans 8:26-27).

Similarly, Paul, in a later letter to the Church of Colossae, encouraged believers to 'devote themselves to prayer'. It would appear from varied experiences of the apostle, that his victory was as a result of his prayer life.

Throughout the Bible we can see devotion to prayer highlighted in many chapters. They all refer to prayer as a dedication, commitment to God and loyalty. A perfect example is Colossians 4:2: 'Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving' (*New American Standard Bible*). This small verse speaks of giving thanks, being diligent in prayer, attitude in prayer, vigilance and being prepared. Everything that Paul had to be to be victorious in his challenges.

What does it mean to be devoted to prayer? Churchword.org states: 'Prayer is where we can bring our concerns, our needs and our hearts to God in complete honesty. Prayer is of immense value and importance. Devotion is effort, not skill and fortunately being devoted does not take or require skill.' The *Bible Study Guide* defines 'devote' as giving entirely to a specific person, activity or cause, zealous or ardent in attachment, loyalty and affection. We can see Jesus being very devoted in prayer. A good example is when he prayed in Gethsemane. He prayed three times before he was able to reach a sense of peace or calmness. He also prayed at his baptism (Luke 3:21-22), after healing people (Luke 5:16), he prayed all night before choosing his disciples (Luke 6:12-13) and before walking on water (Matthew 14:23). You can see after each prayer that he was calm and aligned with the will of God.

**'WITH CHRIST
I KNOW I WILL
OVERCOME.'**



I have witnessed the power of prayer. On leaving university I received my dream job working as a reservations agent for my country's national airline. Nothing could stop my joy. However, the storm came. In my fifth year with the company, it was sold with the option of employees continuing with the new owners. As a top-performing agent, I was confident I would continue in my dream job. However, it never happened, and I was devastated. Amid the confusion, I learned that the new company had hired me. However, my contract was withheld by my former supervisor. The storm in my life intensified and I was bereft of peace. In my time of pain and confusion, I realised that these storms made me draw closer to God in prayer. Today, I serve God and his people as the Territorial Projects Officer. This ministry has truly showed me the power of prayer and to never doubt God for he knows exactly what he is doing.

Do you sometimes feel confused or lonely? When I faced the situation with God, I came out more than a conqueror. What do I mean when I say, 'more than a conqueror'? Simply put, I can say that whatever I faced, no matter how big or small, or impossible it may seem, with Christ I know I will overcome. The apostle Paul encourages us to: 'Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus' (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

I still experience storms of various categories, but God has given me peace in the midst of them. I am not naive. I devote myself to prayer everyday so that when the storms come, I am guarded with the promises of his word.



Dear Lord, you are the lifter of my head. The only one who knew me before I was born. Help me to always be assured that you will never leave me nor forsake me. Help me to remember that through prayer, I am more than a conqueror and with you all things are possible. Amen.

TEPHANIE HAUGHTON

CARIBBEAN TERRITORY


Tephania lives in Kingston, Jamaica. She has found being an only child to Salvation Army officer parents both fulfilling and challenging. She is known by those around her as a jovial person who seeks to make others happy. She enjoys Bible study and often refers to Romans 8 as a source of encouragement when faced with mounting challenges.



STOP FEARING, START TRUSTING!

DEUTERONOMY 3:22

CAPTAIN NANA FATOUMA TOGO



The Lord made it clear: Moses his servant will not enter the Promised Land. He ordered Moses to commission Joshua to replace him then the Lord told Joshua: 'Do not be afraid of them; the LORD your God himself will fight for you' (Deuteronomy 3:22).

Why should we stop fearing?

The expression 'fear not' is used at least 80 times in the Bible, most likely because the Lord knows the enemy uses fear as a strong weapon to create doubt and anxiety, to destabilise us and to limit our victories.

Fear causes stress and anxiety, which can weaken our immune system and are linked to cardiovascular diseases, ulcers, irritable bowel syndrome, fertility problems and a shortened life expectancy.

Fear is a lack of trust in God and his promises. It is a poison used by the devil against God's children. Fear paralyses the body, soul and spirit and it makes us doubt God's love and care for us, discouraging us.

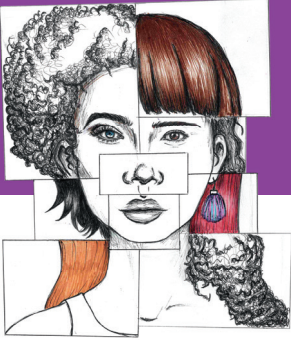
Fear destroys the peace of heart. It creates in us a lack of self-esteem and we become overrun with negative thoughts, a road which can lead to drug and alcohol dependence, and even suicidal thoughts. Fear is a silent killer both spiritually and physically and is a barrier to abundant life in Christ Jesus.

We may fear the unknown, persecution, loss, diseases, the coronavirus virus, terrorism, death, but fear not, because we have a mighty warrior by our side and his love will never fail. The Word says no matter what happens, no matter where we are, we are more than conquerors in all these things through Christ who loves us.

Why should we trust in the Lord?

The Israelites' fear and disobedience meant they were prohibited from entering Canaan and were banished to the wilderness, a punishment that also affected their descendants. Forty years later, through faith and obedience, Joshua and his people claimed the Promised Land. This generation had learnt to put their trust in the Lord and his promises.

'THE TRUE POWER OF A NATION OR INDIVIDUAL IS NOT IN ARMAMENT, WEALTH OR FAME BUT IN THE LORD.'



DISCUSS:

- * In whom do you trust?
- * Read Philippians 4:6-7. How does this help you to live a fearless life?

In Psalm 20:7 David said: 'Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.' For as long as there have been armies and weapons, nations have boasted of their power, but such power does not last. Empires and kingdoms turned into the dust. The true power of a nation or individual is not in armament, wealth or fame but in the Lord. He alone can preserve someone and give eternal victory. Hallelujah!

In the Old Testament, the Lord intervened to give victory to his people. With the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ we can live a victorious life as long as we stay close to him and feed our souls with his word. With Jesus, we are unshakeable, even during a global pandemic!

To conclude, David said in Psalm 27:

The Lord is my light and my salvation—
whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life—
of whom shall I be afraid?

When the wicked advance against me
to devour me,
it is my enemies and my foes
who will stumble and fall.

Dear sisters, let us be deeply-rooted in Christ, as through Jesus we are overcomers.



Lord, make me thirsty for your Word so I may conquer the spirit of fear in me!

CAPTAIN NANA FATOUMA TOGO

MALI REGION

Captain Nana serves as the Regional Secretary for Women's Ministries and is the ACI 2000 corps officer. Her husband Captain Andre Mere-Bara is the Regional Secretary. They trained in the Democratic Republic of Congo before taking up appointments in Zimbabwe, Burkina Faso and Mali. She is the mother of one daughter and one son.



PREPARED TO TAKE A STAND

1 SAMUEL 17:45-47

MAJOR JOLENE HULL

'David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty ... All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD'S and he will give all of you into our hands".'

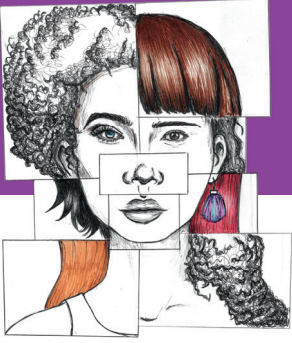
Challenges and opportunities are a part of all stages of life; and many variables contribute to our response to take these either head on or run from them. Either way we find ourselves on the spectrum of being fruitless or flourishing, broken or successful, exhausted or exhilarated, or simply weak or strong. As we journey through life it is a personal decision to succumb or overcome the fear of the unknown. However, for those who have the love of Christ and the knowledge of his presence and power there is very good news, for 'in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us' (Romans 8:37).

Many believers are familiar with the story of David and Goliath. We can see throughout 1 Samuel 17 that David has numerous challenges and opportunities. Yet David, a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14) does not give into the negative pressure of the people and circumstances around him. Instead, David accepts each challenge and opportunity as a way to show God's character to others.

As we read 1 Samuel 17:45, we see David and Goliath confronting each other. At first look, David sees a giant, a man more physically powerful, ready to fight and win with tools of this world. On the other hand, Goliath sees merely a boy, lacking the physicality and means necessary for a win, and an easy target. And yet, David forewarns Goliath that he and Israel have the Lord's protection as he calls on the name of the Lord. This is important because as believers, we know through scripture that 'The name of the Lord is a fortified tower, the righteous run to it and are safe' (Proverbs 18:10). In addition, we know to not 'trust in [the] bow, [because the] sword does not bring [the] victory; but [God gives] us victory over our enemies' (Psalm 44:6-7). David was equipped and ready!

The next verse describes how dire and lost man can be when they are separated from God and his character, but God uses even this to his glory: '... and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel' (1 Samuel 17:46). Even today challenges and opportunities can cause our circumstances to be dire and ourselves lost as we think about self and not the presence of God and his character. The importance here is choosing to be a seeker of God's own heart, so that the glory and presence of the Lord will be known.

'THE LORD'S DESIRE IS FOR YOU TO KNOW HIM AND HIS HEART.'



DISCUSS:

- * Identify the giants in your life, the negative pressure of the people and circumstances that come against you.
- * Today, are you fighting these giants with things of the world or with the character of God?
- * Who (or what) do you need to take a stand against, and how are you going to make God's character known?

Looking at David's words in verse 47, 'All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD'S' seems to be a summary of what was just said to the Philistine. However, to the believer these words are filled with reminders. First, the world's tools for battle (anger, hate, greed, jealousy, etc.) are not used by God, as they are not of him nor his character. Second, the Lord's desire is for you to know him and his heart. Doing so equips the believer to live a life that is full and rich in the Lord. Finally, surrender; surrender your challenges and opportunities to the Lord. Ask him to be in control of your heart and mind, while seeking his will in your life.

Today, understanding and wisdom comes from David's story as life circumstances (even yours) can put one in the battle against things seen and unseen. Each day you have a personal choice to succumb or overcome the battle, and as you choose, be reminded that the Lord has chosen you for this time and he has equipped you for this moment to be more than a conqueror.



Lord, I surrender myself to you. Help me be prepared to come against the negative pressure of people and circumstances in my life; not by using the things of this world, but by claiming you as the victor in all things. Amen.

MAJOR JOLENE HULL

USA CENTRAL TERRITORY

Major Jolene is the Territorial Women's Ministries Secretary. She and her husband are blessed with four children and love being parents. Jolene describes herself as a life-long learner. She is compassionate and nurturing and finds joy in helping those around her not only grow but flourish. In her quieter moments you can find her snuggled up in front of the fire with a cup of coffee and her Bible.



THROUGH STORMS AND FIRES

ISAIAH 43:2

CADET ELIZABETH ZACHARIAH

'When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze' (Isaiah 43:2).

I was around five years old when I had a nightmare that I was drowning in the sea. I remember the feeling of water choking my throat and nostrils, and there I was trying to desperately gasp for air. Just when I was about to give in and let the water close over me, I woke up with a start.

It took me years to pick up the courage to learn to swim and even today, I still remember the feelings of helplessness and desperation from the dream. It had affected me so.

The Jews were going through some of their most difficult times when the prophet Isaiah wrote this passage. They had continued to disobey God and found themselves in captivity. They were facing much suffering, trials and persecution at this time.

We may not be facing a life of hard labour like the Jews were, but our pain and suffering may very well be just the same. Life's issues and problems may threaten to overwhelm you, just like the waters in the deep blue sea.

Your life seems to be falling apart, nothing is going the way it is supposed to and it just seems impossible to breathe. You may even be facing a spiritual battle that threatens to consume you. And then when one issue is resolved, there comes another and you feel way out of your depth. You cannot seem to catch a break!

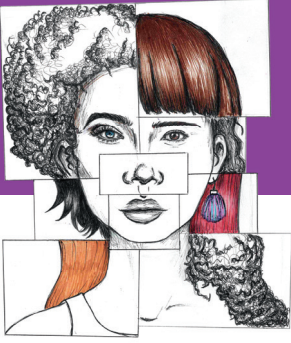
In Isaiah 43:2, God is offering us an amazing promise – the very same one he made the Jews when they were going through their toughest times in history – that God will protect his people. He says he will be with us when we pass through troubled waters and that we will not be harmed when we walk through fire.

The fire here reminds me of the story of the three Hebrew men – Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 3) who were cast into a fiery furnace for refusing to bow down and worship a gold image, and yet came out unscathed. This only happened because of God's protection upon them!

What Isaiah has written here is that we will never have to go through difficult times alone. And more than that, those of us who trust in Jesus' name, he has promised us that he will support us through our challenges, give us strength to overcome them and deliver us from them without harm.

Wow. What an incredible assurance. What a beautiful show of love by God. Despite the fact that Israel has continued sinning against God, he continues to be faithful to them and even assures them of his steadfast protection!

'HE HAS PROMISED US THAT HE WILL SUPPORT US THROUGH OUR CHALLENGES, GIVE US STRENGTH TO OVERCOME THEM AND DELIVER US FROM THEM WITHOUT HARM.'



DISCUSS:

- * Do you trust God to deliver you through all circumstances?
- * Think of the last time you were struggling with something in your life that was overwhelming and difficult. Did you turn to God for strength and help? Do you believe he delivered you?
- * What changes can you make in your life so that you will learn to rely on Christ and trust that he will be with you and take you through your storms?

Now, note that God is not saying 'if' you pass through the waters, rivers and fire, but 'when'. God will not always change our circumstances. That means we will be sure to face trials and suffering in life. The physical and spiritual challenges will come, but we have God's assurance of deliverance and hope.

We only have to read the Word of God about all those who have come before us and have trusted him through all circumstances of life such as Moses, Joshua, David, Paul and others. He has promised to never leave us nor forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:6).

Dear friends and sisters-in-Christ, as I read this verse repeatedly, I started to keep it close to my heart. Soon, the words became my source of strength and hope as I learned to persevere through my most difficult moments in the strength of the Lord. And I began to understand here that the Lord wants us to call out to him in times of difficulties and struggles. He is the only one who can bring us through. As you meditate upon his words here, I pray that you experience the same kind of strength and peace knowing that God is with us.

When the going gets tough, let us learn to trust in God's Word and his promise to us. If you feel overwhelmed and helpless with whatever you are facing right now, just look to Jesus. If the pain of your circumstance seems to consume you, just remember his words in Isaiah 43:2. We will be more than conquerors with him by our side.



Dear Lord, thank you for your promise that you will be with us and take us through waters, rivers, and fires. Help us to turn to you in our time of great need. Amen.

CADET ELIZABETH ZACHARIAH

SINGAPORE, MALAYSIA AND MYANMAR TERRITORY

Cadet Elizabeth is a second-year cadet (Messengers of Grace Session) from Malaysia who is excited about what the Lord has in store for her as an officer. She was a journalist and a documentary producer when the Lord called her into full-time ministry. She enjoys cooking, reading and long walks.



WHO IS A CONQUEROR?

ROMANS 8:37

CAPTAIN DIANA CAMPOS

'In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us' (Romans 8:37).

Some years ago the Lord gave me the opportunity to study Koine Greek. It was a very interesting experience that has enabled me to acquire the knowledge to study the words of the New Testament in the original language and to understand to a greater depth the sense and meaning.

I want to share with you three words that filled me with blessing from Romans 8:37.

Who is a conqueror?

In the dictionary, the word conqueror describes a person who takes possession of a territory using force, weapons or strategy. The Greek word for conqueror is *'hypernikáō'*, meaning 'hyper, 'beyond', 'excess' and *'nikáō'* meaning 'to conquer', 'utterly and overwhelmingly victorious'.

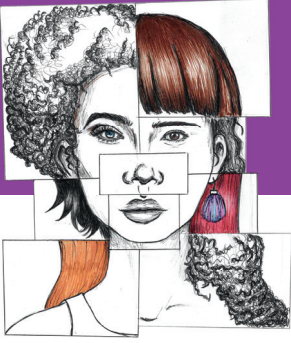
We can interpret this word as: 'excess of conquest', 'super-conqueror' or 'beyond total and overwhelming victory'. As I was studying this word, I was reminded of King Solomon and the incredible and marvellous way in which he conquered far more kingdoms than all the kings of Israel. I would venture to say that none conquered as many as he did. A few generations back Abraham had been promised that he would be given the Promised Land (Canaan), and then 15 generations passed from Abraham to Solomon; it could be said that through Solomon the 'total' conquest was granted.

It is true that the Lord is calling us to be conquerors; but not as those who just take a 'territory' but to go 'beyond total and overwhelming victory' to enjoy an 'excess of conquest' in our lives.

Who is with us?

Next, we find the Greek word *'diá'* which translates as 'of one who is the author of the action', 'as well as its instrument' or 'of the efficient cause'. It speaks of one who 'goes back and forth to go the whole way', 'successfully', 'cause', 'conduit'.

'THE LORD CHOSE US, HE "PREFERRED" US, HE SELECTED US TO LOVE US, EACH ONE OF US.'



DISCUSS:

- * When you think of the translation of conqueror ('excess of conquest', 'beyond the total and overwhelming victory', 'super-conqueror') what do you think?
- * How do you think this translation can bring assurance of the Lord's will in your life?

As we allow the Lord to walk the road with us 'back and forth', we recognise that he gives us the victory, we are not just talking about winning, but about having his company on the good days and on the tough days, on days when we lose heart and need extra strength to achieve victory. Even so, we must recognise that he is the author of our conquest. We must recognise that he is the author and the one who causes our victory. We will not conquer the 'ground' using force, weapons or strategy, but through Jesus Christ.

Who loves us?

'*Agapao*' is the last word I want to talk to you about. The translation is 'prefer', for us as Christians to 'live for Christ', and as one writer describes it: 'to embrace God's will, choose his plans and obey him'.

The Lord chose us, he 'preferred' us, he selected us to love us, each one of us.

I don't know if you have ever felt that you are the preferred one or the favourite, but I want you to know that you are God's preferred one, he desires good for our life.

Agapao 'reflects an unselfish love, it is the purest and most exalted love, a love that cannot be equalled, a love that compels one to sacrifice oneself for the sake of another'. The Lord loves us in this way, with a generous love without hidden interests, a love that is not selfish, a love that gives all because he loves us, as Romans 8:32 mentions: 'He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?'

Today I encourage you to hold on to this love, cherish it and accept it in your life.

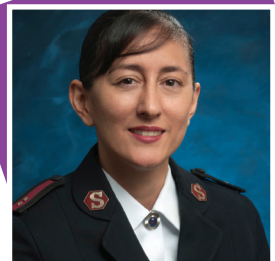


Lord help us to reach 'beyond total and overwhelming victory'. May we walk holding your hand, receiving your pure and exalted love. We believe that you are the all-powerful God who will help us to achieve what you have prepared for our lives, let us yield control to you.

CAPTAIN DIANA CAMPOS

LATIN AMERICA NORTH TERRITORY

Captain Diana Campos serves as the Territorial Women's Ministries Officer and has the privilege of serving countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala and Costa Rica, and at the training college alongside her husband Captain David Campos. They have enjoyed each of their appointments and feel grateful to all the cultures that have opened their arms to allow them to serve in the work of Christ.



CULTIVATING HOPE

ROMANS 8:37

REBEKAH MCNEILLY

'No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us' (Romans 8:37).

Hope will always be the path of resilience. Without hope, we have no reason to be resilient. Without hope, we have no reason to survive the depths of pain we undoubtedly face. In recent months I have experienced a real calling of the Holy Spirit to allow God to shift my perspective. I found myself 'stuck' in an impossible decision – one that felt like it offered me two hopeless outcomes.

I felt the Holy Spirit whisper: 'Maybe, Rebekah, I have brought you here to show you that I am always your third option. I am always your "way out". Have you considered that I have a plan that will surprise you, and the point of this season is to teach you to have faith when you cannot fix it on your own? Have you considered that I am teaching you to find hope in me, when you feel you can no longer find it through your **earthly avenues?**'

When I prayed over the process of writing this mini devotional, I asked God, 'What do women around the world need to hear?' I felt him whisper, 'They need to be reminded of hope. They need to be reminded that *I am their hope.*' So, let us practise a twice daily discipline in hope.

Morning Discipline in Hope: 'Take every thought captive'.

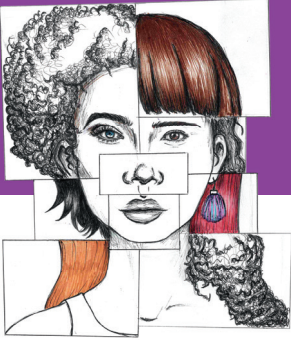
Life will be far heavier if we do not train ourselves in this biblical (and scientific!) principle. Contemporary schools of thought in psychology and counselling will call it 'identifying and reshaping negative thought patterns.'¹ The Bible pre-dates these with that same wisdom: we must be master over our thoughts. We can be master over our thoughts.

Allison tells the story of a moment she experienced with her younger sister, Tammy, on a bus ride home from their university. Tammy battled anxiety, and was prone to panic attacks, sometimes over things that appeared irrational.

Only minutes into their bus ride, Tammy began to panic. Public transport and a sense of being 'trapped' with no escape were especially frightening experiences for her. Allison recounts watching Tammy unravel into rapid, erratic breathing, big tears and a wild look of panic. Allison remembers saying, 'Tammy, breathe. You are afraid that you can't escape this bus. The truth is though, we absolutely can if we need to. I'll go down over the stairs and tell that bus driver we are having a medical emergency, and we need to him to stop immediately. We can get out of this situation if we need to. You are safe.' Allison describes this experience as one of the more victorious moments Tammy had over her anxiety, as she was able to repeat those words to herself and calm down before the bus even arrived at their destination.

Sometimes our fears are entirely rational, and we cannot physically remove ourselves from stressful or tough times. I recently understood that the saying 'God promises to never give us more than we can bear' is a misunderstanding of 1 Corinthians 10:13. Sometimes, we *will* face more than we, in our humanness, can bear. That is why we need to continually cultivate an intimate and consistent relationship with God. Sometimes, like Tammy, it requires 25 minutes of repeating a truth aloud, or in our mind: 'I am protected. The God who sees me, the God who loves me is nearby. He will not forsake me.'

¹ <https://www.healthline.com/health/cbt-techniques#types-of-cbt-techniques>



DISCUSS:

- * Write down what you are thankful for today. Be intentional, be specific. Do this each evening.
- * Try this practice from Southland's Hearing God teaching. Write down the initial of your first name, and then write out a question, a thought, a fear or a victory to God. Then, write a 'G' for God. Then wait. Listen, invite him to speak. Just write what comes. God will never say something outside of what the Bible says, he will never tell you to hurt someone else or yourself. He does speak to everyone. His words will bring life and hope and comfort. We must practise listening to him!

1. What anxious thoughts occupy much of your mental space? Have you made an intentional effort to stop them as soon as they begin? Have you made it a practice to surrender those thoughts in the morning and in the evening?
2. Do you believe that God can and will meet you, even when things are falling apart? Do you trust in his power, goodness and wisdom, even when things do not make sense from our human perspective?

Evening Discipline in Hope: 'Stop comparing. His love for you is enough.'

In our main Scripture passage, the second part of the verse is '... through him who loved us'. Such a simple, foundational piece of our faith in Jesus is that 'He SO loved us...' Yet love, in our modern-day world, is shallow, selfish and often conflated with romance, infatuation or hedonism.

To be loved by the God of the universe is to be fully known – including in those painful memories, those selfish, shame-inducing mistakes and those lazy, undisciplined seasons of distance from God – and still chosen and *pursued*. Even though I don't have children, I can easily understand how this parallels a parent's love for their child. I can remember my parents stretching the Christmas budget to try to include everything on each of our (myself, and my three sisters!) lists. I can picture my dad tearing up when my little sister went through a painful season of depression and addiction. He was not ashamed of her in any way, he longed to take away her pain and suffering, even though her choices had deeply wounded him at times. I know that their deepest desire for us is that we live Christ-centred, fulfilled, meaningful and hopeful lives. Not everyone grew up with parents who loved them like this. Yet even the healthiest earthly love cannot compare to God's love for us.

It is of the utmost importance that we fix our eyes on our Father and ask him to instil in us a trust that he loves us. We miss so much when we turn our eyes away from him and look at our brothers and sisters in envy and resentment. In 1 Corinthians 2:9 it says, 'For no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no heart could fully know how great the plans God has for those who love him.' It is our great responsibility to nurture a love for God that is grounded in the truth about who he is, and not based on the human error that so often misrepresents God and his tender compassion, never-ending protection and intimate affection towards us.



Father, cultivate in us the discipline of hope and of faithfulness in our relationship with you. Draw us closer, that we may experience your presence like never before. Thank you for never forsaking us. Amen.

REBEKAH MCNEILLY

CANADA AND BERMUDA TERRITORY

Rebekah grew up in The Salvation Army, travelling to corps across Eastern Canada and France with her officer parents, April and David, and three younger sisters. After finishing her master's degree she came across a job posting to work with The Salvation Army in Canada. She felt a great hope at the thought of returning to her roots! She works as the Resource and Social Media Coordinator for the Women's Ministries department.



A VICTORIOUS LIFE

REVELATION 2-3

CAPTAIN THUSHARI PEIRIS

Life is a battlefield and living is a struggle, but we can choose to face life as a conqueror or as a loser. The flesh tempts us (Romans 7:18) and Satan is waiting for us to fail, but as Christians we must rise up and claim the victory that Jesus has already won for us. According to Revelation 2 and 3, the losers will inherit nothing but those who are victorious will inherit heavenly blessings. God's Word is our guide to becoming victorious people.

THE SINFULNESS NATURE

Science and the technology have advanced but there has been a great decline in values and virtues. The reason is clearly shown in the Word. God created a totally blessed world. But man, the centre of God's creation, disobeyed his commandments and made the entire creation sinful. According to Romans 3:23, 'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' and Luke 13:3 shows that those who do not repent will perish.

ARE YOU ENJOYING GOD'S LOVE FOR YOU?

Anyone who accepts Jesus Christ as their personal saviour will have the opportunity to be free from eternal defeat. For that redemption, we must:

- Believe that Jesus Christ is our saviour.
- Believe that he has the power of forgiving sins.
- Admit our sinful nature and repent.
- Submit ourselves completely to Jesus Christ.

We are helped by the grace of the Holy Spirit as victory cannot be achieved as a result of our own abilities, efforts or strength (Zechariah 4:6); the people who are guided by the Spirit are blessed in every way.

HOW DO YOU CONTINUE YOUR VICTORIOUS LIFE?

Even after accepting Christ as our only Saviour, we will endure many trials and tribulations, but by recognising our weaknesses and strengthening our faith in Jesus Christ, we gain the strength to overcome persecution.

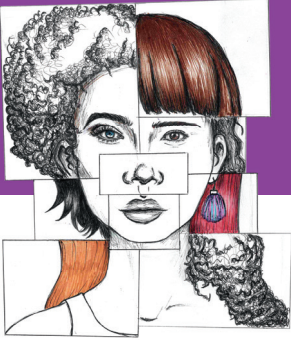
Even after becoming a follower of Christ, we are not immune from Satan's attempts to lead us astray. To overcome these temptations we must:

- Wear the armour of God.
- Strengthen faith and trust in God.
- Be strengthened by daily meditation on the Word of God and prayer.
- Always abide in God's love.
- Face life without fear.

IS YOUR TRIUMPHANT LIFE LIMITED TO THIS EARTH?

False teachings and doctrines can misguide us into expecting a victorious life through the fruitfulness we receive on earth. But the real victory we have in Jesus is eternal.

'ANYONE WHO ACCEPTS JESUS CHRIST AS THEIR PERSONAL SAVIOUR WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE FREE FROM ETERNAL DEFEAT.'



DISCUSS:

- * Am I living a victorious life?
- * If 'yes', how can I continue to live victoriously?
- * If 'no', what changes should I make in my life to achieve a victorious life?

We suffer because of the sinful nature of the earth. Those who build their life in Christ will never be destroyed or defeated by the destructive conditions of the earth. We will overcome the catastrophic conditions of the world because our lives are built on a solid foundation, Jesus Christ.

ARE YOU READY TO BE A VICTORIOUS PERSON AND ENJOY THE HEAVENLY PRIVILEGE?

In Revelation 2 and 3, we discover that the victors who fight and win on the battlefield of life will receive a great heavenly blessing through the one who loves us, Jesus.

- 'To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God' (2:7).
- 'The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death' (2:11).
- 'To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it' (2:17).
- 'To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations' (2:26).
- 'The one who is victorious ... I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life' (3:5).
- 'The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God' (3:12).
- 'To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne' (3:21).

Fight the good battle of faith to the end through God who loves us. Be victorious, be triumphant and enjoy the eternal privileges bestowed by God!



Loving Father, help us to live victoriously for all of our days. In Jesus' name, amen.

CAPTAIN THUSHARI PEIRIS

SRI LANKA TERRITORY

Captain Thushari serves as a corps officer at Colombo Central Corps. She grew up in a non-religious environment. At the age of 20, she came to know Christ and was saved. Today, she and her family serve God with great joy.



FAITH OF OVERWHELMING VICTORY

ROMANS 8:38

LIEUTENANT RAN LEE



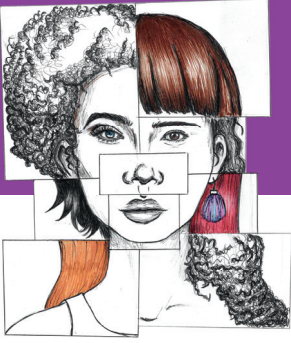
'No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us' (v37)

We are saved by the grace of Jesus, and he always leads us with his love. God gives love and mercy to all who seek and rely on him. This is the Lord's covenant and eternal promise for us.

We live in his grace and at the same time we are in a fierce spiritual war. Ephesians 6:12 reads 'for our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms'. We are waging a fierce war against the power of sin and death of evil spirits. This is a fight that must be fought everyday by the saints saved in the name of Jesus.

In this spiritual war, Christians might feel overwhelmed or discouraged because they face similar situations repeatedly. We experience frustration, anger, sadness, loneliness, failure, lethargy and even depression which have negative impacts on our lives. But what does the Bible say about temptations? 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, 'No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.'

'GOD IS FAITHFUL; HE WILL NOT LET YOU BE TEMPTED BEYOND WHAT YOU CAN BEAR.'



DISCUSS:

- * 1. What kind of grace did God grant me during the test?
- * 2. What is my spiritual weakness? How can I be trained?

God allows trials and lets us stand up and grow up. I may still feel weak to fight against this temptation, but as much as I trust in God, he will lead me with his powerful hands. He leads us to conquer and he helps us to mature spiritually.

Let us not get discouraged and wander even if challenges seem too difficult to overcome. Let us believe in God's love and faithful promises for us and move forward. Remember these words from Romans 8:37. Jesus loves us and through him we can become more than conquerors. For the Lord loves me, I have confidence that I will be victorious in any test, and we are more than conquerors who are victorious over all temptations. Only because he loves us!

The most important thing in the spiritual war of Christians is to look to Jesus who is the conqueror and we must put our faith in him who has granted us victory. As we struggle with spiritual battles every day, I pray that overwhelming victory can be achieved by everyone.



God, please lead me in the right direction so that I can look to you in all situations. Help me to overcome spiritual battles to achieve an overwhelming victory.

LIEUTENANT RAN LEE

KOREA TERRITORY

Lieutenant Lee is currently serving as a corps officer at Habuk Corps, Jeolla Division, with her husband Captain Myoung-jin Kang. They have a four-year-old son. Lieutenant Lee is very grateful and happy to serve The Salvation Army as an officer.



THE STRUGGLE IS REAL, BUT THE BATTLE IS ALREADY WON...

EPHESIANS 6:10-17

LIEUTENANT JANNE VÅJE NIELSEN

Paul writes in his letter to the church in Ephesus about the armour of God and about a struggle 'against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms' – what we might refer to as spiritual warfare.

It seems to me like the topic of spiritual warfare, unfortunately, tends to go in one of two ways: over-focusing on the spiritual realm, to the point of losing touch with the material world, which turns every little bump in the road into 'attacks' from the devil. Even though it starts out as a sincere devotion to Jesus and his rule, it takes the focus off Jesus and is all about the struggle. Conversely, there is ignorance or denial of the spiritual battle. If hindrances in our ministry, opposition to the gospel, division among believers and other small or big problems in the Church, or in one's personal life, is looked upon as being part of the spiritual struggle, we might end up focusing only on our problems, rather than looking at Jesus to get the right perspective.

When Paul writes about spiritual warfare, he is reminding us about God's power above all other dark powers! We are encouraged to put on God's armour – simply so that we can stand firm against attacks. In this passage we are not encouraged to fight. We should, however, be able to defend ourselves on the day of evil (1 Thessalonians 2:1-10, Ephesians 5:16). With the strength and power that God provides we are on the winning team. In fact, the battle is already won by Christ on Calvary.

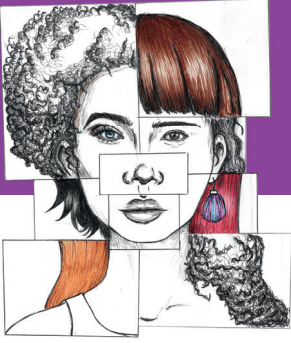
Still, for some mysterious reason, the struggle is ongoing. As we move and grow, working for the Kingdom, we might experience hardship, resistance and some very real implications in our own life caused by spiritual forces wanting to stop us and the spreading of the gospel.

I love how Paul uses the metaphor of armour, giving each piece a spiritual function. It must have been easily accessible with the Roman soldiers around at the time (maybe even looking at one of the guards while writing it imprisoned). But this is not a completely new metaphor. The belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness and helmet of salvation is imagery found in Isaiah 11:5 and 59:17. Both of these verses describe the coming Messiah. But the image of 'the feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace' (Ephesians 6:15) may be an allusion to this verse, also in Isaiah:

How beautiful on the mountains
are the feet of those who bring good news,
who proclaim peace,
who bring good tidings,
who proclaim salvation,
who say to Zion,
'Your God reigns!' (Isaiah 52:7)

Now, this is interesting! Even though shoes are important for protection, the allusion to the Isaiah verse is not about defence or a battle at all. This may imply that sharing the

'WHEN PAUL WRITES ABOUT SPIRITUAL WARFARE, HE IS REMINDING US ABOUT GOD'S POWER ABOVE ALL OTHER DARK POWERS!'



DISCUSS:

- * How can you keep Jesus at the centre throughout times of struggle?
- * Pray through this passage of Ephesians standing in front of a mirror and make a point to 'put on' each piece of the armour as you pray it aloud.
- * What does 'being more than conquerors' mean to you in the context of the spiritual struggle?
- * If you recognise a pitfall of either over-focusing or ignoring the spiritual struggle, pray for guidance to put it right, keeping Jesus at the centre of your worship.

gospel of peace, living our life as the sent people of Christ is indeed a very good way to protect our souls from the devil. It's also a very good way to stay on course – keeping our focus on Jesus and not ending up in difficulties: 'And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith' (Hebrews 12:1-2).

The next piece of armour is the shield of faith, a large whole-body shield. It makes me think of my own personal faith. It doesn't really seem bulletproof, and would maybe work better as a thin veil, rather than a shield. But faith is not about my ability to muster up the right amount, it is about whom I put my faith in. He is more than strong enough! When Jesus encountered the devil in the desert, he didn't use any supernatural force or perform any miracles (quite the opposite to what the devil was enticing him to do). Jesus simply showed faith in the promises of the Father.

The helmet of salvation protects our head. We know that this might be the most important part of our body, as it is essential to the working of all the other limbs. It becomes very clear with the description of the helmet as the helmet of salvation, that the whole armour is given by grace. It doesn't depend on our own efforts, as salvation is provided solely through the sacrifice of Jesus. We know that spiritual warfare sometimes comes across as attacks on our mind. Remembering that we are saved by grace, that the battle is won, resting in his unfailing love, is a very important defence against such attacks.

The last part of the armour is the only weapon which is provided for us. The sword of the spirit is the Word of God that is 'sharper than any double-edged sword' (Hebrews 4:12). This weapon is also used by Jesus when encountering the devil in the desert, who quotes scripture! The Word of God as the sword of God's armour may very well refer to the Bible, and we'd do wisely to read and memorise it, as we are promised that the Holy Spirit will remind us of what we have learnt (John 14:26). Jesus himself is '*logos*' – God's Word. Therefore, knowing Jesus personally, and calling upon him to fight for us, is our best weapon.

We will encounter hardships, some of which may be implications of a spiritual struggle, some of which are not – whatever the struggle, Jesus is the one who brings the peace that surpasses all understanding.



Jesus, be the centre of my attention today and lead me towards a deeper understanding of your power. Help me to seek you first, to receive by grace the power of God and to stand firm.

LIEUTENANT JANNE VÅJE NIELSEN

NORWAY, ICELAND AND THE FÆROES TERRITORY

Lieutenant Janne serves as a corps officer in Harstad, a town in the very north of Norway. She ran a full-time discipleship programme for young adults and planted a corps in Oslo before going into training college. She loves to teach and preach on the Word of God and is passionate about Jesus and everyday life discipleship. She loves a good conversation and to read a book by the fireplace.



SMALL VICTORIES

1 SAMUEL 17:10-51

NATALIA RAK

Struggle, resistance or retreating are things we experience throughout our lives and although they may break us down, they make us stronger.

Every day we face a series of situations that either bring us closer or push us away from victory. When facing these battles, we must choose how to respond: to be on the offensive or defensive, to try and overcome the situation or to retreat. Our choices affect not only us, but the entire army (our family, friends and church).

Our lives can be incessant wars against loneliness, betrayal, deception, injustice, dirty dishes, an unprepared dinner, a misunderstanding in the family, a broken-down car and dishevelled hair that does not want to turn into the desired hairstyle. Really, we are at war with ourselves. Whose side are we on? Who are we fighting for? Who is our commander? What does it take to win the war?

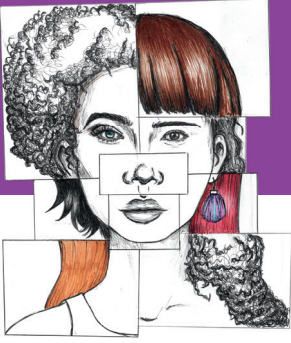
Perhaps we need to be 'athletic', 'pumped up', have a black belt in a martial art or a be professional shooter? Not at all!

Let us recall the battle of Goliath and David in 1 Samuel 17:10-51. Goliath was strong, a professional warrior and a descendant of giants. He was wearing armour and had a shield and spear. David was a very young man, not very tall, and had only a sling and a few stones as a weapon. But the shepherd defeats the warrior! David did not have equipment, proper weapons or military training, but had faith in the Lord. He accomplished something incredible – he defeated the 'invincible' giant. How many 'Goliaths' do we have in our lives that we are afraid to go to battle with?

'You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hands ... and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands' (1 Samuel 17:45-47).

The Lord is ready to give us everything we need to win, but we often do not notice the warning signs in peacetime, and we lose the war. We succumb to gossip, deception, laziness and convenient opinion. When explosions and shots are heard, we turn the TV up louder.

'NO "GOLIATHS" CAN OVERCOME US AND WE WILL BE VICTORIOUS THROUGH THE ONE WHO LOVED US.'



DISCUSS:

- * Write a list of your victories. How did you achieve them?
- * Next write a list of your battles – past and present. What will help you to be victorious?

Battles take place every day, but the main battles are not battles with evil, global warming or pollution of the oceans, but with ourselves. Every win, every right decision, every unspoken angry word or condemnation, every kind word in response to an insult, hugs given at the right moment, a phone conversation at the right moment, to stop when you are carried by a stream of anger and indignation, to forgive, even when forgiveness is not sought – these small victories may not seem important, but these are not overlooked by the main Commander of our lives.

'In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us' (Romans 8:37).

When we accept Christ as our Saviour, when we trust in the One who gave his son for us, then what should we fear? No 'Goliaths' can overcome us and we will be victorious through the One who loved us. We don't need a sword, shield or armour when we have the full armour of God. We are already more than winners because our reward is in Heaven.

I invite you to look openly at your life and battles, whether you are hiding in a trench, lying in hiding, waiting for someone to fight Goliath on your behalf or taking the full armour of God and overcoming all doubts and fears, we must move towards victory.

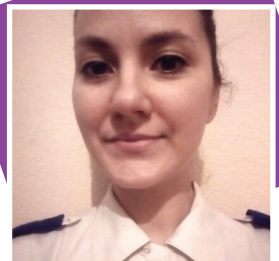


All victories begin with victories over oneself. I pray for every girl and woman who walks this path of struggle to face the world. I pray for your victory and your triumph over the world!

NATALIA RAK

EASTERN EUROPE TERRITORY

Natalia loves Christ, is a wife and the mother of two mischievous sons. She leads Dnipro Corp, Ukraine.



PEACE IN CHRIST JESUS

JOHN 16:33

LIEUTENANT ESNAS CHESTIT NDINYA

'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).

Peace is something that we all aspire to have, a peaceful home, a peaceful life, a peaceful mind, but peace can only be found in Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

How Christians are invited to live in the light of John 16:33

In John 16:33 we are told: 'In this world you will have trouble'. The disciples may have been surprised to learn this. They knew that Jesus was the Messiah and Saviour, and as far as they were concerned there was no way they were going to face trouble, tribulation or hardship while with Christ. To them this sounded untrue. But as God the Son, Jesus knew the truth. He knew the kind of life they were going to face after his departure. That is why Jesus immediately followed up with the comforting words, 'But take heart! I have overcome the world'.

'JESUS PROMISES US A PEACE THAT SURPASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING AND THAT IS FOUND IN HIM ALONE.'

Followers of Jesus Christ will suffer great distress in this world

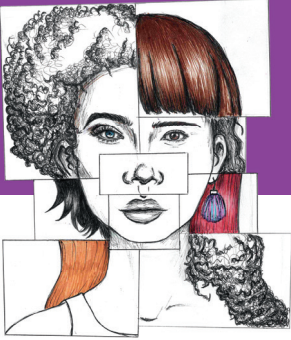
John 15:19 tell us we are not of this world and that is why the world hates us. As followers of Christ we will face tribulations from the surrounding world. We may face opposition from family members (especially those who may not be saved), adversaries, employers or neighbours. As Christ's followers we may suffer great distress. We may be denied our rights, experience abuse or unjust treatment. Some have shed blood or lost their lives for being followers of Christ. We may also experience inner struggles as we try to live a life of holiness in the face of the temptations and challenges of the modern world.

Followers of Christ must 'take heart'

Why did Jesus add this phrase? There is no way we can be more than conquerors if we do not take heart. What it means to take heart is to take comfort, to have the assurance from God that things will eventually change, to be at peace even though outwardly we may have many troubles. We are being encouraged to take heart and press on. Christ is counting on us to be strong and hopeful in all that befalls us because we have the assurance of overcoming the world, because Jesus himself overcame.

Followers of Christ have the assurance that the victory is already won

Jesus told his disciples: 'I have overcome the world'. He assured the disciples that because he overcame the world, they too were going to overcome because he is their ever-present help. Psalm 23:1-6 reminds us that the Lord Jesus Christ is our shepherd. Just as sheep have the assurance



DISCUSS:

- * What tribulations are you facing?
- * How does the truth that Christ has conquered on our behalf encourage you to take heart in the face of these tribulations?

of being watched over by the earthly shepherd, the psalm affirms that Jesus, the good shepherd, is with his followers and sees them through all the dangers. Even when we pass through the valley of death, we shall fear no evil because he is with us. What an assurance!

As followers of Christ, we have the assurance of overcoming because 'the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world' (1 John 4:4). We are overcomers because the great I Am is always with us. No matter how much the devil troubles and brings trials to Christians, he is powerless because Christ has conquered sin and death. Therefore we are more than conquerors in him who has set us free.

We should never be surprised or shocked when faced with trials and opposition because this strengthens our faith, as stated in 1 Peter 4:12. In times of trouble, we can take heart because Jesus overcame the world with its hardships and trials. With him, we can also overcome. When we are facing the ups and downs of life, let us remember that Jesus promises us a peace that surpasses all understanding and that is found in him alone.



Dear Father, thank you for loving us so much that you sent your Son to enter human suffering and conquer on our behalf. Help us to place our hope not in the things of this world but in you alone. Help us not to focus on the daily dangers we see around but to put our trust in you and have faith in you so that we can be more than conquerors. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

LIEUTENANT ESNAS CHESTIT NDINYA

KENYA WEST TERRITORY

Lieutenant Esnas is married to Sosnes and they are blessed with one baby girl.





MORE THAN CONQUERORS

During this series of Bible studies, we trust you have explored many different aspects of the theme 'More Than Conquers', and the truth of the words in Romans chapter 8. Spiritual growth is an ongoing development, so we invite you to summarise what you have experienced and learnt during this season of Bible studies in a time of self-examination. Let's take time to look inward in a humble and clear-minded assessment of ourselves through the lens of the Bible, not to compare with other people, but to listen to the Holy Spirit.

Meditate on the following Bible passage: 'There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear' (1 John 4:18).


Quote for reflection: 'As love has its perfect way, it leads us into purity of heart. When we are perpetually bombarded by the rapturous experience of divine love, it is only natural to want to be like the Beloved.' (Richard Foster)

Drill-down questions: What steals my peace and makes fear grow in my life? Am I making progress in my spiritual formation regarding defeating fear? How do I practise God's love driving out my fears?

Meditate on the following Bible passage: 'What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Romans 8:31-39).

Quote for reflection: 'Conquerors fight their own battles. You are more than a conqueror, that's why the battle was fought on your behalf by Christ. However, it does not mean you should stay idle ... Dress up and go to work!' (Israelmore Ayivor)

Drill-down questions: What are my key takeaways from this season of Bible studies? What practical actions have I taken? What evidence can I find in life that I am more than a conqueror?



Meditate on the following Bible passage: 'For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so, through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God' (2 Corinthians 1:20).

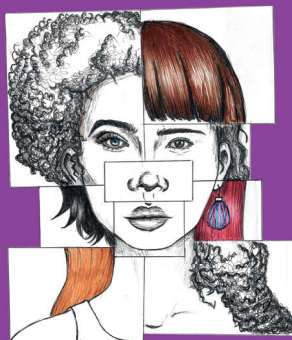
Quote for reflection: 'Jesus is the divine YES – God's affirmation as all God's promises is fulfilled in him. Knowing God has the power to do what he has promised, and that he never breaks his promises, gives us confidence.'

'Relying on God has to begin all over again everyday as if nothing had yet been done.' (C.S. Lewis)

Drill-down questions: What experience do I have of God's promises in my life? How do I act on and embrace God's promises? Am I growing in faithfulness to God and my promises to him, or am I stagnating by being too comfortable in my spiritual life?



I love you, Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold' (Psalm 18:1-2).



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The Salvation Army International Headquarters
101 QUEEN VICTORIA STREET, LONDON EC4V 4EH