

Maintaining a Spirit of Optimistic Faith in a Messed-Up World

How do we maintain an attitude of faith and victory in a messed-up, crazy world? How do we walk in confidence and holy optimism when things are collapsing around us?

Every day, we are exposed to all kinds of bad news through the media, from the latest Islamic terrorist attacks to the latest moral madness, from plane crashes to natural disasters.

Added to this are the very real hardships that many of us experience in our own lives, from a cancer diagnosis to an unexpected divorce, from a painful church split to a devastating car crash.

How do we live in faith and joy and expectation when we're surrounded by evil and calamity?

Here are six simple principles to enable you to live as an overcomer.

1. Keep your head above the details.

It's part of my calling to sound the alarm and call for repentance, and since I do a daily radio broadcast and write several articles a week, I'm constantly confronted with very bad news. In fact, sometimes I'm bombarded by it, almost around the clock.

Last week, when the governor and legislators of Indiana were caving in to pressure, I was copied in several email threads that stayed busy through the day, as conservative leaders talked strategy and bemoaned the bad decisions that were being made. These emails continued to pour in as I did my live broadcast, and it was easy to get swallowed up in negativity

when I checked my emails during the short program breaks.

The key is to keep your head above the details, which do not reflect the final or ultimate reality.

Circumstances change.

Opinions are fickle.

Emotions can be up and down.

But God never changes, and His promises are everlastingly true.

Don't allow yourself to get caught up in the swirl of negative details.

2. Stay in the Spirit through the Word, prayer and worship.

Faith is not denial.

Faith is not putting our head in the sand.

Faith is believing in the absolute truths declared by an infallible God.

In that sense, faith is taking hold of the ultimate, highest reality.

In order to do this, we must make choices to get in the Spirit, and we can do this by reciting and reading and meditating on God's Word, by casting every burden on the Lord in prayer, and by worship and praise.

It's no coincidence that the miraculous, liberating earthquake that delivered Paul and Silas came when they were singing hymns and praising God at midnight while chained in a prison cell after receiving a severe flogging (see Acts 16).

They could have been complaining and focused on their very real problems and pain; instead they were praising and focused

on the goodness of their God.

3. Remember that Jesus has risen from the dead and is Lord.

I don't mean to be trite, but all I really need to know is that Jesus died for my sins, rose from the dead and ascended to heaven as Lord, and with that firsthand knowledge, I can live in confidence the rest of my life, come what may.

As we just celebrated the death and resurrection of Jesus this past weekend, we were reminded of how dark things looked for the disciples when their Master was crucified.

It looked as if things were over, as if their hopes and dreams were shattered, as if they had allowed their faith and expectation to rise—the Messiah is here!—only to be crushed with the cruel disappointment of reality. “Your so-called Messiah was a failure, a man just like the rest of us. You were dead wrong!”

And then He rose from the dead, shattering the very power of death, ultimately ascending to the right hand of the Father where all authority is heaven and earth is His (Matt. 28:18).

All the bad news in the world can't outweigh that reality, and since I know that our Lord will one day return to establish His kingdom on the earth, I know that the final outcome will be wonderful and blessed, and that fuels my daily attitude of faith.

4. Put yourself in remembrance and testify to the goodness of God.

In the midst of severe trials, it's easy to forget what God has done in the past.

Put yourself in remembrance.

Go back to those old journal entries.

Dust off those old books filled with amazing accounts that cause your heart to soar.

Testify to what the Lord has done for you in the past, and listen to testimonies from others.

Before you know it, faith will be rising afresh in your life.

5. Don't be moved from doing and believing what is right.

None of us remember the names of the 10 Israelite spies who said, "We can't take the land," but all of us remember the names of Joshua and Caleb.

We don't admire those who waver, who lack courage, who are double-minded.

Instead, we admire those who stand tall in the midst of the storm, who don't bow down to the spirit of the age, who refuse to compromise.

Determine to be one of those people as opposed to a fair-weather child of God who buckles the moment things go wrong.

Developing spiritual and moral backbone pays great benefits, enabling you to see the vindication of the Lord, thereby giving you greater strength to overcome in the next trial and test.

6. Remember that God is always working.

What Joseph's brothers did to him was absolutely terrible, but God used it for the saving of many lives (see Gen. 50:15-20), not to mention the pruning of his own character.

The crucifixion of Jesus was the worst crime committed in human history, but God used it for the salvation of the world.

And it was out of the ashes of the Holocaust that the modern State of Israel was born.

Remember that our Father is always working, turning all things for the good of those who love Him while also conforming us to the image of the Son of God (see Rom. 8:28-32).

He turns stumbling blocks into stepping stones and takes things that were meant for evil and makes them into platforms of good.

That is the God that we serve, and that is how in Him, we can overcome and be more than conquerors (see 1 John 5:4; Rom. 8:35-39).

Millions of believers have proven this to be true in their generation. Let's prove it to be true in our own.

Michael Brown *is the author of 25 books, including Can You Be Gay and Christian? and host of the nationally syndicated talk radio show "The Line of Fire." He is also president of FIRE School of Ministry and director of the Coalition of Conscience.*