

Your Spirit-Filled Key to Responding to Change, Transition and Crisis

At the beginning of 2020, I told our church confidently, “I believe 2020 will be a great year.” However, the events of 2020 seem to indicate the opposite. But what if national awakening is unfolding amid the suffering, frustration, and unrest?

Through it all, the church is being tested and refined. God is allowing adversity to bring forth a pure faith that is motivated by love—not hate. God is purifying our love for each other. How can we pray for revival in our land when we have anger at other believers in the church? God is more concerned that we love and value one another than being “correct” on all issues. Everyone is entitled to their thoughts, beliefs and opinions. However, we are to “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3, NIV).

Jesus said all the Law and Prophets hang on these simple commands:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:30-31, MEV).

We are to love others as we love ourselves—always. Much of the hatred in our world would cease if humanity, from a renewed heart, could love others with God’s love.

Unity is not uniformity on every issue, but loving Jesus in such a manner that His love overflows to others by treating

them with honor, kindness, tenderness and love. I have been saddened the last couple of weeks at the vitriol between Christians over social media or between each other—yes, between Christians—over various issues plaguing our nation and the world. Keep in mind the axiom, “united we stand, divided we fall,” still holds true in the church and society. The enemy thrives on division and chaos. Let’s respond in an opposite spirit by allowing the fruit of the Holy Spirit to shine through.

If you were unable to listen to my sermon last Sunday, “Strengthen Yourself in the Lord,” I encourage you to do so. I shared insights in the sermon I’ll not be able to capture in this article. I believe it is a timely word for the church.

This article will be part one of a two-part series on strengthening yourself in the Lord. Today I want to look at Joshua and David and how they responded to change, transition and crisis.

Joshua

Now after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun, the assistant of Moses: “Moses My servant is dead, so now get up and cross over the Jordan—you and all this people—to the land that I am giving to the children of Israel. I have given you every place that the sole of your foot shall tread, as I said to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon, as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Mediterranean Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory. No man will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, I will be with you. I will not abandon you. I will not leave you.

“Be strong and courageous, for you shall provide the land that I swore to their fathers to give them as an inheritance for this people. Be strong and very courageous, in order to

act carefully in accordance with all the law that My servant Moses commanded you. Do not turn aside from it to the right or the left, so that you may succeed wherever you go. This Book of the Law must not depart from your mouth. Meditate on it day and night so that you may act carefully according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way successful, and you will be wise. Have not I commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

After the exodus from Egypt, God invites Israel to possess their inheritance in the promised land. Unbelief robs a generation, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb. Forty years later, Moses dies, and God directs Joshua to "cross over." The Jordan River is at flood stage, perhaps a mile wide, and in the natural, it's not the time to cross.

Joshua and the nation are mourning the loss of their leader Moses. It may have seemed to the people, "How can we go on?" But God speaks, "Moses my servant is dead, now arise and cross over!" Joshua was probably mourning too, saddened that his spiritual father and mentor has passed on. But once God speaks, something shifts in Joshua. During times of transition and crisis, it is important to wait on God to hear what He is speaking and then act confidently. We are strengthened in the Lord by His voice, by His presence and by His leading, among other things.

Remember, when Jesus is leading, obstacles become opportunities!

Courageous faith sees opportunity in contradiction. It is a faith that deflects chaos and releases God's peace in a turbulent world. When God directs, faith ignores the circumstances and sees the opportunity to live in promised inheritance. Confidently trusting Jesus amid the uncertainties of life determines how much we abide in God's peace, joy and

victory.

Could it be that 2020 is destined to be a great year? It's not how we would have planned it, but God, who knows the end from the beginning, is still in control! He didn't cause everything occurring this year, but He is working all things together for our good—even among those who don't believe. {eoa}