

Don't Give Up the Fight in 2025

In early December I hosted a men's retreat at a camp near my home in Georgia. We hiked four miles, enjoyed great Southern food, enjoyed fellowship around an outdoor fireplace, slept in bunkhouses, worshipped and prayed together, and listened to several of the younger guys share short sermons. Because of the relaxed atmosphere, many of the guys opened up and shared that they were feeling battle-weary.

Let's be honest: 2024 was an intense year for many of us. The Christian life is compared to warfare for a reason. When we struggle to trust God in the face of challenges with finances, relationships, temptations, regrets, disappointment, depression or anxiety, many of us feel like giving up. That's when we must pick up our spiritual weapons and fight, even when we don't feel like it.

At the men's retreat I reminded the guys about Eleazar, who was one of King David's "mighty men" listed in 2 Samuel 23. He is given hero status in the Bible because of his determination in the midst of a fierce battle. At a time when all the other soldiers had withdrawn from the conflict—probably because of fear—Scripture says Eleazar kept going. Second Samuel 23:10a (NASB 1995) says: "He arose and struck the Philistines until his hand was weary and clung to the sword, and the Lord brought about a great victory that day."

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This brave soldier won special commendation because he stayed in the battle even when everyone else quit. Even though he was exhausted, he kept swinging his sword. Because he had been mentored by David, Eleazar had learned a lot about how to rely

on the Holy Spirit's power during warfare. He was so determined to fight that his hand was literally stuck to his weapon. He refused to weaken his grip until he had finished the job.

Why is that story in the Bible? It's because God wants you to be a determined fighter, not a quitter. Too many of us today shrink back when life gets tough. We allow our emotions to control us. We are easily dismayed by every negative circumstance. Our spines are squishy, our resolve is weak and our grip is feeble.

King David spent plenty of time in the Lord's boot camp, and then he trained his mighty team of warriors. David wrote in Psalm 18:34, 39: "He trains my hands for battle, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze ... You have girded me with strength for battle; You have subdued under me those who rose up against me."

It's important to note that these verses appear in Scripture twice—once in Psalms and also in 2 Samuel 22:35 and 40. I always pay extra careful attention to anything that's repeated in the Bible. God wants us to be determined warriors.

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I believe this is a word for many people who dropped their weapons in 2024. Remember the Hebrew Christians of the first century who experienced intense persecution. They were actually thinking of throwing in the towel and abandoning their Christian faith. But the writer of Hebrews told them: "Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a

great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised" (Heb. 10:35-36).

When I enter a new year, I always feel some apprehension. I ask myself: *Do I have what it takes to face these challenges?* The giants of 2025 look fierce. The mountains look insurmountable. The battle looks scary, so my natural inclination is to run from the front lines and look for a cave to hide in. But running away isn't an option.

No, I will not let fear, anxious thoughts or discouragement deter me. I will suit up. I will pick up my shield of faith, I will put on my helmet of salvation, and I will grab my sword and hold it with the same gritty determination as Eleazar did. I will march into 2025 with confidence, knowing the Lord has girded me with His strength to face every obstacle. I pray you will do the same.

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