

Learn to Weather Adversity

✘ When I was growing up, I learned the meaning of standing strong in God by watching my family. They were living examples I could observe every day. I saw how faithful my parents were to God and to each other, and I wanted to be like that, too.

My mom was a deeply committed woman of God. I am convinced that every demon and devil of hell knew her name—her first name. My grandmother was so full of the power of the Holy Ghost that she could lay hands on the sick and, believe me, they would recover.

My daddy was a farmer, who started his day between 5 a.m. and 6 a.m. But every morning, he would get up an hour or so before work to pray for everybody—12 kids and later, 50 grandkids.

When my older sisters would come home from school each day, before they changed their clothes and started dinner, they would go on their knees and pray. Like our mom, they would fast for days at a time, too.

Growing up in that kind of environment embedded in me a clear concept of what a life lived for God should look like. Although I've missed the mark more than once, I've always wanted to walk with God, work with Him, worship Him and stand strong in Him. Now, I want you to enjoy those same things too.

STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

Standing strong isn't about having inner strength or being a tough person. It doesn't mean you've been hardened by life's experiences or are a graduate of the school of hard knocks.

You don't stand strong because your legs are sturdy or because you have German, African or Native American blood. Nor is it because you happened to grow up in New York City or on a ranch in Montana. Finally, it's not because your mean big brother

used to beat you up.

You stand strong because you are strong in your spirit. You are able to stand tall (with confidence) and stand long (with perseverance) when you've learned how to draw from a reservoir of spiritual strength that comes from God.

You stand strong in your spirit because you are filled with God's Spirit. But you are only strong in God because you are, in and of yourself, weak. Paul said, "When I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10, NKJV). You have such limited power of your own that you need to keep asking for God's Spirit to fill you up continually.

Standing strong means knowing who God is, and trusting Him to do what He says He will do. You can't become strong in your spirit overnight, and it doesn't happen automatically. It's a lifelong process of growth, and you have to cooperate with it. When the disciples wanted to see an example of the kingdom of God, Jesus showed them a child. To become strong in spirit, you must become childlike in your faith.

Sometimes the only way to become strong in spirit is through trials. The adversities of life can transform you and make you stronger in the Spirit. Perhaps you've already seen this in your own walk with the Lord. However, sometimes, you learn this lesson through watching the Lord work in someone else's life.

Because of a medical error, author Bob Sorge has suffered with pain, both physical and emotional, for more than a decade. Formerly a successful and gifted worship leader and pastor, today he is unable to talk above a whisper and can no longer pastor a church or lead worship.

But there is one thing he can do, and by doing it, he has become a closer companion of God and an inspiration to countless people. What can he do? He can stand strong.

In his book *In His Face* (Oasis House), he wrote: “Some victories are gained not through an aggressive posturing of faith, but by simply standing. God didn’t deliver Joseph from his prison because Joseph had a dynamic stance of faith, but because he kept his gaze fixed upon God.

“Joseph didn’t understand what was happening to him. He could get powerful revelations for other people (the butler and the baker), but when it came to his own life he could see nothing. But at the right time, God came and delivered him.”

Far from being a last resort or a compensation for repeated failures, standing strong is the result of a life lived in and for God. Standing strong keeps Bob—and you and me—right in the middle of the palm of God’s hand, no matter what our circumstances are.

STRENGTH TO ENDURE

We grow stronger when we put our roots down in Jesus. He is our perfect example in all things. Throughout the years of His ministry, Jesus stood firm. When He arose from the grave, He went on to stand for all eternity in fullest authority and share His authority with those who would believe in Him.

It’s obvious that someone who stands strong in God has a different kind of spirit inside. That kind of person does not go along with the crowd. That kind of person does not yield to fear. That kind of person does not compromise his or her faith, even when everybody else decides to do so.

Joshua and Caleb were two members of the select group of 12 who got to sneak into the Promised Land to spy it out for Moses and the people of Israel. The Bible declares that these two men had a “different spirit” from the rest of the leaders (Num. 14:24).

When the spies returned with their report, 10 of them said: “This is impossible. All of the armies of Israel’s tribes will not be strong enough to prevail against those fearsome giants

that we saw. The land of milk and honey is occupied already—by giants. Just forget about it. We're stuck here in the wilderness now " (see Num. 13:31-33).

But Joshua and Caleb stood firm, even though the other 10 spies—and all the people of Israel—disagreed with their wisdom and refused to believe they could take the land (see Num. 13:30). This refusal on the part of the people created a crisis of the highest magnitude. God threatened to cancel His promise and start over with new people (see Num. 14:11-12). But Moses persuaded the Lord to stay His hand. Now they would have to endure a 40-year wilderness trek and the slow attrition of all of the unwilling masses.

Joshua and Caleb, to their everlasting credit, didn't add insult to injury and rebel against Moses' leadership, even if they may have privately disagreed with it. They just stuck to their original evaluation—"Yes, we can conquer that land. It's ours. God has given it to us." They were willing to stand firm for 40 long, dusty years in the wilderness without wavering, despite negative opinions and many seeming setbacks.

In the long run, after persevering, they won. Even Moses didn't get to possess the land. But Joshua and Caleb never gave up the idea that God wanted them to conquer the Promised Land.

STRENGTH BEYOND OURSELVES

The lives of Joshua and Caleb exemplify four key elements that are necessary in order to know how to stand in the strength of the Lord and take any promised land: Sight. You must have the vision for what God wants to accomplish. The Word says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Prov. 29:18, KJV).

When God plunked Ezekiel down above a whole valley of dry bones, and He said, "Ezekiel, prophesy!" Ezekiel had a little trouble believing that so much deadness could actually come back to life. But after he spoke to those dead bones and

decreed that they should live again, they did (see Ezekiel 37).

Ezekiel had to speak life to his vision. The whole thing was unreal before he did that. It's the same with you and me. Sometimes we need to speak life to our dreams.

Don't be afraid to shout a proclamation and declare a decree over the vision you have. God gave you that vision, and it needs to stand up and live. Your part is to pray and believe—consistently, persistently.

Right. You must have a grasp of why the vision is clearly yours to claim. Because your vision is God's idea and not yours, you don't want your prayers to reflect your limited viewpoint or opinions or desires. Your vision must be nourished and kept alive with God's own Word. Every time you ask Him to fulfill your vision, you must base your request on His Word, the Bible.

You need to be in the Word every day. Read it, sing it, memorize it and pray it back to Him. His Word declares His intentions and shows you how your vision fits in with them. His Word prepares your heart for prayer and furnishes you with the vocabulary you need when you pray.

It is an irrefutable fact—God cannot lie (see Num. 23:19). When you stand in prayer, you can be rock-solid sure of God's integrity. Stand in agreement with Him about your God-given vision, and continue to immerse yourself in His Word. He will convict you and correct you, and His Word will keep you on the path of faith so you can persist in your prayer until the end.

Might. It is extremely important that you comprehend the supernatural power that is at your disposal. I would be remiss if I failed to mention the importance of fasting. If you combine fasting with your prayers, you will see greater results. In fact, there is no better way to underline your prayers and put them in boldface print.

In Matthew 6:16, Jesus said, “When you fast” not if you fast (emphasis added). He assumes that you will do it, and He gives you suggestions for doing it well. He wants you to fast in some way, usually in a variety of ways, consistently. Don’t wait for Him to give you a big sign in the sky to tell you to do it. Just do it. You will find that fasting helps you stay right at His feet.

When you are seeking God about something, you need to pursue Him relentlessly, full of faith, until you feel a release in your spirit. I can remember when I was a small child, being with my mom and older sisters at all-night prayer meetings. I would fall asleep in the pew as they tarried in prayer.

As I grew older, I began to appreciate that tarrying meant persevering until you broke through to an answer. It meant faithfully staying before God, waiting until He assures you that you have prayed enough.

Your adversary, the devil, will try to make you want to settle for less than the full answer to your prayers. He will try to wear you down, but if you hang on to the Word and God’s promises, you will outlast him.

Fight. You must be willing to take on giants, and able to maintain that willingness over the long haul, persevering in prayer until the chosen day finally arrives. At first, Joshua and Caleb were the only ones who were willing to tackle the impossible situation. They were ready to fight those giants, the sooner the better.

As it turned out, because they represented the minority opinion, they had to wait to do their fighting. But amazingly, they kept the faith so well that they were still primed to fight, and as strong in body and spirit as they had been when they were fresh from their spying mission 40 years before (see Josh. 14:7-12).

There will always be opposition to your mission. But

everything God has said will come to pass. Your destiny is wrapped up in His plan. Your life has eternal significance, and your prayers will bring your God-given destiny to fruition.

Do not grow weary. Stand strong against any temptation to give up the fight. Stand before God, day in and day out. Ask Him to give you a different spirit, as He did for Joshua and Caleb. He will do it!

Judy Jacobs is known for her inspiring and anointed singing and preaching. She is the author of Stand Strong (Charisma House), from which this article was adapted.