

Max Lucado Declares War on 'I Can't'

The time has come to attack the disease. It has raged, untouched, too long.

It has infected, unhindered, too many. Misery bobs in its wake. Abandoned dreams, ravaged marriages, truncated hopes. Hasn't the malady contaminated enough lives?

It's time to declare war on the pestilence that goes by the name "I can't."

It attacks our self-control: "I can't resist the bottle." Careers: "I can't keep a job." Marriages: "I can't forgive." Our faith: "I can't believe God cares for me."

"I can't." The phrase loiters on the corner of Discouragement and Despair. Had Old Testament Joshua mumbled those words, who would have blamed him? His book begins with bad news: "After the death of Moses the servant of the lord" (Josh. 1:1).

There was no one like Moses. When the Hebrew people were enslaved, Moses confronted Pharaoh. When the Red Sea raged, Moses prayed for help. When the ex-slaves were hungry, thirsty, or confused, Moses intervened, and God provided food, water, and the Ten Commandments.

Moses meant more to the Hebrews than Queen Victoria, Napoleon, and Alexander the Great meant to their people. If Moses' face were carved into Mount Sinai, the Hebrews would never let another share the honor with him. To lose Moses was to lose the cause.

And they lost him. Moses died.

Oh, the dismay, the grief, the fear. And yet, with the grass yet to grow over Moses' grave, God told Joshua, "Moses ... is

dead. Now therefore, arise" (v. 2).

We would take a different tack. "Moses is dead. Now therefore, grieve ... retreat ... reorganize ... find a therapist." But God said, "Now therefore, arise."

A major theme in Joshua: God's power alters the score. Moses may be dead, but God is alive. The leader has passed, but the Leader lives on.

Even so, Joshua had reason to say "I can't." Two million reasons. Two million Hebrews. This population was the size of the city of Houston.

And they all had a list of excuses.

Excuse No. 1: "Moses is dead."

Excuse No. 2: "My people are battlefield tenderfeet."

Excuse No. 3: "Canaanites eat folks like us for breakfast."

But Joshua never declared defeat. Before he could assemble any fears, God gave him reason for faith. "Arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them" (Josh. 1:2).

Keep in mind, the Hebrews were gypsies. They didn't even own a sandlot. Yet in one grand, divine fiat, they were given the deed to the land of their dreams. God dangled the keys of Canaan in front of Moses' protégé and said, "Take it for a spin." And in one of Israel's finest moments, Joshua said, "Yes." He received his inheritance.

The word inheritance is to Joshua's book what delis are to Manhattan: everywhere. The word appears nearly sixty times. The command to possess the land is seen five times. The great accomplishment of the Hebrew people came down to this: "So Joshua let the people depart, each to his own inheritance" (Josh. 24:28).

When it's time for you to receive yours, don't let your response be "I can't."

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