

God loves to show His stuff

Dan Nelson - pastor

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Have you ever contemplated failure? Many of God's people have. During tough economic times such as these, it seems that there are more people facing fatalistic futures right now than ever before that I can remember. There is a sense of wariness about what comes next. Uncertainty can easily lead to discouragement which feeds frustration and can create despondency, and so the downward spiral goes until we find ourselves in such a pit that there is only one place to look: upward. Worse, the outcome affects every relationship and some families are splitting at the seams.

When the children of Israel were finally preparing to enter the long-awaited "promised land," Moses had just recently left the scene and His protégé Joshua was at the helm. First stop on the itinerary of conquest was Jericho. The potential for fear and trepidation brought reliance upon God for victory. Jericho was famous for its formidable fortifications and there was not any army around capable of giving it any trouble at all. When Joshua gave the battle plan to the troops, it was laughable. First, we are going to march around the city with our torches, then we will bring instruments and yell real loudly. This sounds like a tactical tragedy that would send any intelligent soldier running for the hills. And just like today, obeying God and doing it His way would seem like a fool's mission. People must have thought it some sort of sanctified suicide. Who knew that the impenetrable stonewalls of Jericho would miraculously come crashing to the ground followed by such confusion that their own army would do most of the fighting against themselves? Imagine catching something like that on CNN today.

In our lives, it seems we are up against the impossible a lot of the time. This is the area where God loves to show His stuff. If it's just the common everyday happenings, almost nobody even recognizes when God intervenes. They still want to sit around and debate whether he even exists or not. But when you get yourself in such a mess that one needs a miracle to get out — and only God can do it — this is where the creator who breathed life into you loves to work. But what happens after you get your miracle?

After Jericho fell and the children of Israel experienced their first taste of victory at the power of God, they immediately lost perspective and got cocky. With their next battle on the horizon, they failed to ask God for direction and steamrolled right over

sovereign guidance. It was a disaster! The town of Ai, much less of a challenge than Jericho, would not have needed as big a miracle, therefore they didn't even ask for one. Isn't that just like us? Save God for the big stuff, we can handle the rest. Not so. We need God at every step and juncture. It is when we lose sight of our dependence on God that real failure has set in. And so, the obstacle is not the debacle, as getting thrown into a fiery furnace wasn't loss for Daniel's friends. Actually, it was when things really heated up that victory in God was found.

For the people of God, the first engagement at Ai was a lesson in humiliation, and a reminder of who the real general of that army was. It was time to get back to reporting in for duty in prayer. With God firmly seated back on the throne of their hearts, the subsequent battle would be a walk in the park.

Next time you are contemplating catastrophe, giving up on your dreams, and sliding into a slump of desperation due to self-reliance, stop and go to Jesus with your problems. Pray in honesty and seek help from him. It's easier than you may think to approach Christ with your need. After all, he may be the savior of the world, but he also wants to be your friend. Jesus loves you.

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Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



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Sunday Worship:

9:00 & 10:30am
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
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Mid-Week Study:

7:00pm Thursday
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View