

Winning the Head

Game III - Expectations

Running to Victory:

1 Samuel 17:32-45

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The Bible depicts us *running* a distance race in life. It is tough. It's not easy, but God gives us the ability, the coaching and his companionship to not just finish the race, but to win.

Listen to the promise we read in our stewardship presentation:

In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 1:4-6, NIV)

God began a good work in you. He promises to complete it. Are you confident of this? What is the good work God is doing in you? Jesus is restoring you to intimacy with God. You are being taught and disciplined as God's child until you reach the whole measure of the fullness of Jesus. With Jesus you are running the race of redemption for all humanity and all creation. With Christ in you, you visibly are *the hope of glory* (Colossians 1:27).

I have no great love for running. I never had the hamstrings to outsprint my peers. Nevertheless, I've jogged for health and understand something about running. At the basic level, running requires the gift of legs, muscles and nerves, and balance. It also requires our effort, endurance and commitment. To win a race, we must commit to win, expend effort to win, and grow endurance to win. We won't even finish a distance race unless we first win the head game with negative thoughts. If you don't expect to win, will you commit to win? Will you train to

win? Will you expend the effort to win? Will you cultivate the endurance to win? Will you run to win? To win you must cultivate **VICTORY THINKING**.

What do you think and believe about your life race? Do you expect intimacy with God now, or are you waiting until you die? Do you expect to be as fruitful as Jesus, or do you think that is beyond you? What are your expectations for your marriage, family, health, and community? What do you expect of Bethany (or your church if you are visiting)? Do you believe that God is grooming us to be victorious over the challenges we face? What are you confident of? What do you expect?

In today's Scripture David faced the giant Goliath because he expected to win. He did not say, "I'll face Goliath if no one else will." He did not face Goliath because someone should. He volunteered and fought because he expected to win. *Everyone in Israel believed God could defeat the giant, but only David expected God to defeat the giant through him.* Why? What was he thinking? What fueled his expectation?

David believed that God was working in his life. He understood his battle with Goliath to be a God-vindicating battle. He understood Goliath's challenge to be a defiance of God and his people. Do you understand your challenges to be a defiance of God's people and therefore God? Do you see God at work in your life? Do you expect God to help you and us together become intimate with God and fruitful like Jesus? Do you expect us to overcome our financial challenges, our mission challenges, our human weaknesses... because it's a God-vindicating battle? What do you expect?

Have you been receptive to the **VICTORY COACHING** God has given you? How is God coaching you? Read with me these words:

It was (Christ) who gave some to be apostles... prophets... evangelists... pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-13, NIV)

God puts us together so that as we interact in faith, we build one another until we reach unity in the faith, unity in the knowledge of Jesus, and maturity, attaining to the whole measure of Christ. God is coaching you to win through your church family. Are you confident of this?

Not everything that happens in your church family is of God. Not every thought is of God. To succeed in his race, David had to overcome the group fear of Goliath that paralyzed God's people. He had to overcome the skeptical opposition of his brother and his king. He also had to reject their expectations of how to fight. When King Saul relented and finally permitted young David to face Goliath, he said:

"Go, and the Lord be with you." Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them. "I cannot go in these," he said to Saul, "because I am not used to them." So he took them off. Then (David) took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine. (1 Samuel 17:37-40, NIV)

There is victory thinking, victory coaching and **VICTORY CHOOSING**. David expected to win, but when he followed the expectations of others, he was disadvantaged. He put on King Saul's tunic, walked around in his coat of armor and helmet. He fastened Saul's sword to his side. He took it for a spin and rejected it. It didn't fit him or his abilities. He grabbed the equipment of a young shepherd rather than a battle-tested king.

I had so much fun last week as we celebrated our church's 50th anniversary. The stories really encouraged me. Richard Harper's second mile story... was inspiring. To know this church

was founded with commitment that went against expectations, to know this sanctuary was built with commitment that went against expectations, means that our church's story is intertwined with David's. David didn't take down Goliath the conventional way and this church wasn't born nor did it expand the conventional way.

Today, as human beings, believers and God's church we must not seek to duplicate what others do. We are receiving victory coaching, and we need to do some victory choosing. Our path to victory won't use the same clothes, the same armor, the same programs, or the same thinking and expectations of our peers. Our heavenly Father has a unique plan for us that's decisive for many souls, decisive for families and critical for this community.

Are you expecting us to win? Or do you focus on reasons why we can't win? Every great achievement has required people to ignore the reasons why they'll fail. Daily, for three years Michelangelo lay in pain on his back in cramped position painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Great Britain's Prime Minister Winston Churchill persisted despite crushing bombing and certain invasion. David picked up brook-smoothed rocks and a shepherd's staff even though they could not penetrate Goliath's shield, body armor or helmet. David exclaimed to Goliath:

You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD Almighty—the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.
(1 Samuel 17:45, NLT)

Do you realize like David God is making a name for himself through you? In Hebrews 12:2 Jesus is called the *author* and *perfecter* of your faith. Do you understand that God is perfecting what he began in you, that God is carrying it to completion? Do you realize you were created in the image of a champion, and that God is redeeming and growing you as a champion?

Today, with victory thinking, victory coaching, and victory choosing, we begin victory giving. We are challenged at Bethany by a general fund debt and also by the need to fund God's

vision for our church family. How do we respond as God's children who are growing into the likeness of Jesus?

I realize that God has already been working in your past. However, what if hurts and the expectations of others hinder you? Can you suspend, for a moment, what you believe about giving, so that you can hear Jesus afresh? Then go ahead and ponder what you hear with what you've understood. Remember God is teaching you. God is perfecting you.

There are three things God has led us to do to help you grow in generosity.

First, we call you to plan your giving. We have given you a pledge card or giving covenant so you can plan. God plans his generosity. God planned for our life and redemption. In both Old and New Testaments God calls his people to plan their giving. Consequently, they led their hearts rather than followed them. Although generosity often is spontaneous, people who pledge give on average three times more than those who don't. You become generous as you purpose and plan to be. We encourage you to make a Giving Covenant.

Second, we present tithing. God commanded the people of Israel to return a tithe, one tenth of their income. God's prophets made it clear that this tithe affected their welfare, productivity and experience of God's blessing. The tithe was part of the faith God asked from his people. We do not live under the law of tithing. However, why did God command them to tithe? Wasn't he forming a generous and believing people through tithing? As Jesus authors and perfects your faith, what role will tithing play in your faith? Is there a portion of your income that you will return to God, no questions asked, because the Spirit of Jesus leads you?

Third, we bring to your attention Jesus' words about a widow's mite. We debated the best way to help your church family eliminate our operating debt. Each time the story of the widow who gave two copper coins came up. Jesus said that she gave more than everyone else

who dropped hundreds and thousands times more in the temple treasury. When presented with an opportunity to give, I often think how little can I give and make a difference. Can I give \$100, \$500, \$1,000 or \$10,000 without severely affecting my livelihood? When will God's kingdom affect my livelihood and lifestyle as much as purchasing a car or a house? Am I to alter some life-goals so that God's work is accomplished? With her gift of two copper coins, the poor widow made the kingdom of God her life goal. How is God using this widow's example in your life? What kind of gift to the church would make you like her: \$1,000, \$10,000, \$100,000? Now Jesus will make our heavenly Father's kingdom the overarching priority in your life, and he's growing you to reflect the generosity of your creator and redeemer.

Expect Jesus to take you to new ground in giving. He's grooming you to mature into the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.