

Increase My Faith

The Extraordinary Faith of Ordinary People

Kerry Cain

In true life as well as fictional stories, those that are the most popular and often the most exciting are stories of underdogs, or just ordinary people—stories like a poor guy from the wrong side of Philadelphia, winning the heavyweight championship of the world (Rocky); or the underdog U.S. Olympic hockey team defeating the powerful Soviet team in “The Miracle on Ice.” We all have a natural tie to the little, weak, insignificant people. The Bible is full of stories of these types of people being used by God to do works of faith that set them apart from the rest of the world.

Several years ago I was teaching a ladies’ class where we were studying Bible women who became famous for eternity. As I was leading the class it dawned on me that several of the women in the class were of equal quality, in my estimation, to those we were studying. We often think of Bible heroes as those that are several steps above the people who live today. But I think this is often not the case. The victories of faith revealed in the Word are not limited to those whose names are well known or who were considered to be extraordinary in their faith while they lived.

Let us consider some of the heroes of the Bible, and see that the reason for their victories, or acceptance and praise by God, was because of their faith, not their might.

TOO OLD, MOSES

Moses lacked so much confidence that he could not speak forcefully or even properly. Moses spent the first forty years of his life in the royal house and family of the greatest nation on the face of the earth, Egypt (Ex. 2:1-10). He fled from the life of riches and potential power after he slew an Egyptian who was mistreating an Israelite slave (Ex. 2:11-15). Moses lived in the wilderness as a shepherd until he was 80 years of age. At that time an angel of Jehovah called Moses at the burning bush to return to Egypt and lead the children of Israel out of bondage. This was a task for a great man, and Moses thought he was not that man. God began speaking words of encouragement, but Moses continued to express reasons why he could not do the job.

Moses said, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Ex. 3:11). [All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.] Many of us can connect with his feelings. "I'm not anyone special; I'm not well known; I have little education; I am just a sheep rancher; I have hardly been around other people for forty years; I cannot do this monumental task." God said, "Certainly I will be with thee" (Ex. 3:12). We can have the same foundation that Moses had, because this is exactly what God says to us when he sends us on a mission, "...and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20).

Moses then said, "Indeed, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said...Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I

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AM hath sent me unto you" (Ex. 3:13-14). He is the same one who sends us out to be a light in the world through living pure lives and preaching the gospel. Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58), and "If ye believe not that I am, ye shall die in your sins" (8:24). (The KJV reads, "If ye believe not that I am *he*..." The word "he" is italicized, meaning it is not in the original Greek text, but was added by the KJV translators. It is not needed.) "[H]e that cometh to God must believe that **he is**" (Heb. 11:6, emp. added). If we truly believe that Jesus is "I AM," we have the foundation upon which we can become great leaders, like Moses.

Moses again spoke, "...they will not...hearken unto my voice" (Ex. 4:1). And sometimes this is true; men do reject preachers of righteousness—Noah, Jeremiah and many more. But God speaks to us through the pen of Paul saying, "Preach the word...for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2-3).

Again Moses found an excuse to disobey God: "I am not eloquent...but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Ex. 4:10). God's answer was a question, "Who hath made man's mouth...have not I the Lord?" (Ex. 4:11). The answer is obvious, God made Moses' mouth—AND ours! We, too, are without excuse when God calls us to do extraordinary things by faith.

When Moses finally bowed before God, he then went and stood in the presence of the most powerful man in the world, Pharaoh, and, through Aaron's mouth, said, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go" (Ex. 5:1). An ordinary man, now finally with extraordinary faith, changed the history of Israel and the world.

TOO YOUNG, DAVID

David was a boy whom God had chosen to be king of Israel after the rebellion of King Saul. A youth was chosen because God knew David's heart, his faith, and therefore his potential for greatness (1 Sam. 16:7, 12).

David, too young to be in the army of Israel, came to the place of confrontation with the great Philistine army, the enemy of God (1 Sam. 17:20). There he saw and heard Goliath mock the God of Israel, and challenge the Israelite army to come out to battle. God (not Israel) was not being defended, and David could not understand how this could be (1 Sam. 17:23-26). Young David knew that there was "a cause" for which Israel should stand as evidenced by his cry, "Is there not a cause to fight?" (17:29). Think about this question through twenty-first century eyes: is there not a cause demanding every Christian to engage in battle today?

David determined that he would go to battle. King Saul tried to talk him out of this by saying, "[T]hou art but a youth, and [Goliath] a man of war from his youth" (1 Sam. 17:33). Young people **can** be cocky and think of themselves more highly than they ought to think (Rom. 12:3), but young Christians **can** also be men and women of faith, as was "little boy David." The lad spoke to the giant moments before Goliath's death, and said, "Thou cometh to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts...This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand...that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel...So David prevailed over the Philistine...and slew him" (1 Sam 17:45-46, 50).

What a wonderful example to all Christians, young and old. Is there a cause? There is. Then let us ordinary

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people get serious about the extraordinary battle before us. We know, by faith, the God of Israel, the God of the church of Jesus Christ. Let us win the battle for Him!

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil...take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore...” (Eph. 6:10-14)!

TOO SMALL, ISRAEL

Israel was once engaged in battle against the great and powerful enemy nations of the Midianites and Amalekites. Israel amassed an army of 32,000 men. That sounds quite large until we compare it to the description of the opposing army. They were “like grasshoppers for multitude, and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude” (Judg. 7:12). After God allowed the “fearful” (those who did not have faith) to return home, 10,000 soldiers were left. When God sent home those who were not serious about being prepared for the battle, there were 300 that remained.

God used “a few good men,” 300 in number, trumpets, empty pitchers and lamps to annihilate the enemies of God (read about the battle in Judges 7).

What does God say about the “many” and the “few”? “[W]ide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matt. 7:13-14).

God said to Israel BEFORE the fall of Jericho, “I have given into thine hand Jericho” (Josh. 6:2)—it was already done before they even marched around the city.

He tells faithful Christians today: “But thanks be to God, which **giveth** (literally, continually gives) us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:57, emp. added); and, “For whatsoever is born of God **overcometh** (continual action) the world: and this is the victory that **overcometh** the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4, emp. added).

TOO COMMON, APOSTLES

The apostles came from common folks, average laborers, people just getting by from day to day, as many of us. They were hardened fishermen, detested tax collectors, religious zealots, political fanatics, men who bickered among themselves about who should be the greatest among Jesus’ followers, men who spoke when they did not know what they ought to say. This unusual band of men was chosen by the Savior to be witnesses of His resurrection, and preach to all the world. They did (Col. 1:23)!

The list could go on and on. To paraphrase the Hebrews writer in chapter 11, verse 32, speaking of great men and women of faith: “And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of” plain little Mary, tentmakers Aquila and Priscilla, unreliable Mark, murderous Saul, and many others.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). May God help us to increase our faith that we, too, might be ordinary people with extraordinary faith!

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Kerry Cain preaches for the Colorado City church of Christ in Colorado City, Texas.