

Step Forward – part 2

Joining God’s Team – part 4

January 28, 2024

Life Vision Statement:

By God’s grace, to step forward, as God’s man or woman,
in my spheres of influence, to serve His purposes, for His glory.

Last week we looked at “stepping forward.” It does no one any good to know you are on the football team’s roster if you won’t step foot on the football field. It’s not enough to study the playbook, to study game film, and to be able to explain the intricacies of football if you won’t get in the game.

This week we’ll look at *staying* in the game and *finishing* the game!

DAY 1: Becoming weary in well-doing.

1. Getting involved with people is not easy. We live in a fallen world where things break, things don’t go as we think they should, and many times our efforts to be involved with people seem rather fruitless. And, sometimes we get kicked in the teeth.

2. Even the apostle Paul felt this way.

Galatians 4:11 I am afraid I have labored over you in vain.

Galatians 4:11 (NIV) I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.

3. When any of these things happen we “**become weary in well-doing.**”

4. Paul dealt with these realities. In the following verses, jot down how he dealt with the temptation to throw in the towel:

2 Corinthians 4:1 Therefore, since through God’s mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.

*Galatians 6:9 **Let us not become weary in doing good,** for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*

1 Corinthians 15:57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

5. What strikes you from today’s writing?

DAY 2: Facing the monster of discouragement

1. There are many things in life that are discouraging. When we get discouraged it is easy to lose heart and give up. This can happen in marriage, with our kids, with our career, with our jobs, with our finances, and our relationships.

2. Dis-couragement is the loss of courage. Feeling discouraged can stop us in our tracks—in marriage, with our kids, with our finances, with work, and with ministry.

3. When we *feel* discouraged we “naturally” assume this is a “door-stopper.” We will not really engage with whatever problem or person that seems to fuel our discouragement.

4. We foolishly assume that until we feel some level of courage, there is “nothing we can do.”

5. The bible give a big, fat NO to that way of thinking.

6. Joshua had the double challenge of following Moses’ leadership AND leading the people into the Promised Land against overwhelming human odds.

7. If Moses wore size 13 shoes, Joshua likely felt like he was wearing kids’ size 3.

8. Jot down or underline how God dealt with Joshua.

Joshua 1:7 “Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. ⁸ Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. ⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”

9. Solomon had a similar double challenge, following King David AND building the temple! Jot down or underline how David taught Solomon to address these challenges.

*1 Chronicles 28:20 David also said to Solomon his son, “**Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you until all the work for the service of the temple of the LORD is finished.**”*

10. The writer of Hebrews says we can feel spiritual and emotionally feeble and weak, and, at the same time minister to the people in our lives!

Hebrews 12:12 Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. ¹³ “Make level paths for your feet,” so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.

11. What strikes you from today’s writing?

DAY 3: Becoming whole-hearted

1. As we saw in yesterday's writings, God uses challenges in our lives to shape us. My mentor in Ft. Worth told me, "God is pouring concrete down your spine."

2. Today, we'll look at one of those character traits God is seeking to instill in us: becoming whole-hearted.

3. As we seek to follow Christ, do not be surprised when you see within yourself a divided heart!

Jeremiah 3:10 In spite of all this, her unfaithful sister Judah did not return to me with all her heart, but only in pretense," declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 48:10 Cursed is he who does the work of the Lord with slackness.

4. Here was King David's message to his son Solomon when David was dying. Underline or jot down what strikes you from David's wisdom.

1 Chronicles 28:9 "And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every desire and every thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever. ¹⁰ Consider now, for the LORD has chosen you to build a house as the sanctuary. Be strong and do the work."

5. Jot down what James tells us to do when we realize we are half-hearted (double-minded).

James 4:8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

6. King David had to flee Jerusalem to save his family from his own son Absalom. It seemed like much of the nation was following young king. Absalom wanted to attack his father's apparently dwindling army, but Absalom received some wise advice!

2 Samuel 17:10 Then even the bravest soldier, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will melt with fear, for all Israel knows that your father is a fighter and that those with him are brave.

7. In spite of King David being on the run, having to abdicate his throne and hide his family, David's heart was still whole-hearted.

8. What strikes you about being whole-hearted?

1 Kings 18:61 And may your hearts be fully committed to the LORD our God, to live by his decrees and obey his commands, as at this time."

DAY 4: Becoming single-minded

1. There is a difference in being the person who “dabbles at forty things” versus the person who says, “This one thing I do.”

2. When David was in great need, men rose up to help him fight his battle.

*1 Chronicles 12:33 ...from Zebulun, fifty thousand experienced soldiers prepared for battle with every type of weapon, to help David **with singleness of purpose.***

3. What strikes you about these men from Zebulun?

*1 Chronicles 12:32 ...from Issachar, **men who understood the times** and **knew what Israel should do**—200 chiefs, with all their relatives under their command;*

4. What strikes you about the men from Issachar?

5. The apostle Paul’s life did a dramatic 360 after his conversion in Acts 9.

*Phil. 3:12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. **But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,** ¹⁴ **I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward** in Christ Jesus.*

6. God was re-making Paul into a single-minded man after the most important things in life. In the following phrases from these three verses, jot down what each of these mean to you:

a. But one thing I do -

b. Forgetting what is behind –

c. Straining toward what is ahead –

d. I press on toward the goal –

e. To win the prize –

f. For which God has called me heavenward -

7. What strikes you about becoming single-minded?

DAY 5: Building a fighting spirit

1. If you are going to “step forward” as God’s man or woman, you will need to learn the qualities we have looked at this week.

2. God uses our ministry “challenges” and “opportunities” with people to shape us.

3. Our last quality for the week is building a fighting spirit.

*1 Corinthians 9:24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. ²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. ²⁶ Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; **I do not fight like a boxer beating the air.** ²⁷ No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.*

a. Paul compares himself to a runner in a race (v. 24). How does he run? (vv. 24-25)

b. What motivates him to run? The cheers of the crowds? The acclaim? Fame? Or something else? What is it? Why is it Paul isn’t running “aimlessly?” (vv. 25-26a)

c. Paul then compares himself to a boxer, but in a surprising twist, he changes the metaphor of shadow boxing (for training) to striking a punch to himself. Remember, this is a metaphor! Why does Paul exercise strict training?

d. What prize do you think Paul is talking about in vv. 24 and 27?

4. At the end of his life, Paul writes Timothy a letter (2 Timothy). He is writing from a Roman prison cell and believes he will be executed for his faith. At the end of his letter he writes these famous words...

*2 Timothy 4:7 **I have fought the good fight,** I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is waiting for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.*

5. How do Paul’s concluding words about his life strike you? Is he a man caught up with convenience, comfort, luxuries, “first-world problems”?

6. Look back over these notes. God wants you to step on to the field to play the most important game in life. There are times that are not easy, but God will be shaping these qualities into us!