

CONQUERING THE WHOLE LAND FOR CHRIST

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INTRODUCTION

Struggle! We hate it. We avoid it. We always think of it in a negative light. And yet it is everywhere. Life begins with a struggle. We see this in nature. Tiny birds must peck their way out of an egg in order for their lives to begin. We see struggle in nature, we experience it daily ourselves, and we see it in history. And yet it is these struggles that give us the chance to do our best.

The heroes and heroines of history are not those who took it easy, who had it good, but those who struggled and who overcame seemingly insurmountable odds. A vivid example of this is the Russian writer Fyodor Dostoyevsky, regarded by many as one of the greatest literary geniuses of all time. His books are classics. *The Brothers Karamazov* is regarded by many as the greatest novel ever written. But he didn't start off with this kind of success. The odds were stacked against him.

In 1849, after a few early works, his literary career was disastrously interrupted. He had joined a group of young intellectuals who read and debated French socialist theories forbidden to be openly discussed in czarist Russia. A police informer slipped into their secret meetings, and the entire group was arrested and taken to a place of execution to be shot. At the last minute they were reprieved, and the punishment was changed to penal exile. Dostoyevsky was sentenced to four years of hard labor in Siberia and to serve afterward as a common soldier. In one of his books, Dostoyevsky described the sadistic beatings, the filthy conditions, and the total lack of privacy among the convicts. When he was released from prison, he was sent to a garrison town near Mongolia.

Later in life, the monthly periodical he co-founded, *Time*, was suppressed because of a supposedly subversive article. Still later he spent time abroad to escape creditors after inheriting his brother's debts. These years were marked by physical hardship and poverty, but somehow also by great productivity. He completed three famous novels and returned to Russia in 1873 a world-renowned writer. His last novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, was completed not long before his death. He was successful not just in spite of his struggles, but largely **because of them**.

I. FACE STRUGGLES

The Bible is full of stories about all the struggles in the lives of different people. Let's consider the Old Testament. What was God trying to do in the world back then? He was trying to bring a strong witness through one Holy Nation. What do we read in the Old Testament? War, war, war, all the time. Evil forces were continually attacking God's Holy Nation. The more we read, the more war stories we come across and more people die. All the way from Genesis to Malachi, the OT is filled with battles. Who wants to read about death and destruction all the time? What good is it to us?

Mostly we see the Old Testament wars with natural eyes as natural events in the history of mankind. But I want to encourage you to put on your spiritual glasses and note that in essence they were all spiritual battles against powers of darkness. The Bible tells us that we struggle not against flesh and blood but against spiritual powers of darkness. Look at these wars with spiritual eyes and you will see that there were two different kinds of struggles. There were the wars from the outside, from the Arab nations against the Jewish nation. And there were also wars, fighting from within, when the people of God backslid. When king Saul backslid there was trouble in the land. When king David sinned, people died because of that sin. The battle stories of your life and your mentoring work are identical—inward and outward.

And this isn't just a way of life from ancient times and uncivilized, barbaric people. We find the same principle in the New Testament. We find again the principle of war. We don't find the principle of war illustrated with one nation against the other. But we find the principle of spiritual war against certain churches. We find spiritual war against individuals and especially leaders. It's interesting to read that almost every New Testament writer mentions this spiritual battle. And again we find in the New Testament, just like in the Old Testament, that God raised up certain special people to provide initiative.

II. BE NOBLE CHAMPIONS

Throughout the Old Testament, God used special visionary people—the prophets—to encourage His servants during times of hardship. Yes, God ruled the Israelites through the Temple and priests, a religious system, and through the kings, a secular system. But in between those systems, God raised up prophets in different villages in the land. Their message pierced the air like a warning bell. They were heroes who were not afraid to stand alone against the whole nation of Israel. It was just them and God, and they **burned with a passion** to do His will.

God is still looking for heroes. Just like in the Old Testament, God has been looking for highly active leaders throughout history. And God is looking for highly active brothers here today, brothers who will do more than the minimum. God is looking for prophet- and apostle-type men in this land. God might be looking for you.



A. Be Faithful

Often the Discipleship Training ministry is done by individuals working alone in a special place; coaches faithfully working with what God has given them. Slavic is working alone in his district. Brother Vadim is going to be working alone for 4 months in a new province. It's not always easy to keep doing your best when you are on your own, or to go on in the face of opposition, but it is important. What does that mean? That means that if you do the work, brother, it will be done. If you don't do it, it won't be done. We have the individual responsibility to make it happen. We need to pass on the leadership principles from one to another like a candle or like a light is passed on. That was the ministry of the prophets and that was the ministry of some of the key apostles who wrote the New Testament.

B. Do the Work

Let us look at Haggai 2:4 *"...be strong and work...for I am with you declares the Lord Almighty."* To the natural man this sounds like a contradiction. One might think, "Well if the Lord Almighty is with me, why should I work? The Lord is with us so He is going to do all the work. He is much bigger and much better." Many times when we are asked to work, we think, "It's difficult. It's so much work and I'm so tired. Oh God,

why won't you do something?" God says "I'm already doing it through you." God says, "Be strong. Work! Because I'm with you! If I wasn't here, you could relax. You could lie on the beach." Isn't it interesting? Haven't you sometimes thought it would be just the other way around? "When God is busy, I don't have to do anything I can relax." No. God says **"Be strong! Work! Because I'm with you."**

C. Endure Hardships

Look at 2 Timothy 4: 5 *"But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardships, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill all the duties of your ministry."* He starts by saying, "Keep your head." Don't lose your head. Often when a person meets several difficulties he becomes nervous. He is thinking, "Well, what shall we do now? Do you know? Is it okay? Oh, I forgot!" He starts this and he doesn't finish that, then he tries something else. He's lost his head. It's like he is dizzy. He is no longer focused. The Bible says "Don't lose your head, keep your head." I have. It is working. My attitude to hardships is, "Oh, there is big problem there, but it's behind me, and it is going to push me right ahead." You are a leader so don't lose your head; you keep your head and stay focused.

Then there are these ugly words again: "endure hardships." They are terrible words. All the Bible talks about are hardships. In the Old Testament were wars, in the New Testament spiritual battles. I would just like to go home, sit down and have Christmas. Every day should be Christmas!

Over and over the Bible talks about hardships. It tells us to endure them, to stand, not to lose our heads. Let them be. It's normal. It's a fact of life. You can't avoid it. Then what does he say? He says 'Do the work!' Isn't that interesting? **Endure hardships and do the work.**

A black slave boy of the 19th century who became one of the foremost leaders of his time said: "The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that... if there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who [want the good without the bad] are men who want crops without plowing up the ground; they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. Power [gives] nothing without a demand. It never did, and it never will..."

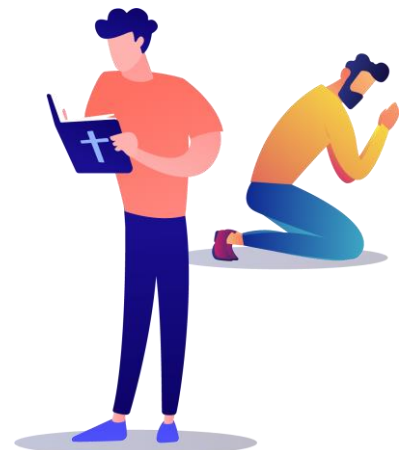
Brothers, you and I know there will be hardships. But they are nothing to fear. They are plowing the field where success will soon grow. As a wise man once said, life is ten percent what happens to me, and ninety percent what I do with it. We must be the noble champions who will press on to the other side, past these struggles, to where victory waits for us.

III. WHEN ALONE, DO EVEN BETTER

Philippians 2:12: *"Therefore, my dear friends as you have always obeyed not only in my presence but now much more in my absence continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling."* I would like to talk with you about that point. When the New Life for Churches founders can't be around, what will happen then? Will your ministry continue? Or will it be written about your province: "They did very well as long as the first generation of Ukrainian missionaries was among them, but when they left, the work stopped." Brothers and sisters, you have obeyed me. You've been very good to me. We have workshops. New Life leaders have been visiting you. And yet, in some way I need to ask you today to work even better when we are not together. We cannot have workshops our whole lives every couple of months. I will be in one place, and you will be in another. I won't be right beside you where I would like to be. What did the apostle say? He said, "In the past you did wonderful, but now that I'm not with you, please do even better." **Do even better!** That's the watchword!

In Mathew 21:28 there was a man who had two sons. He told one of them, "Go and work today in my vineyard." The son looked out the window and said, "Father, there is snow on the ground. Maybe tomorrow or maybe next month, don't worry about it I will do it. Don't worry about it, I will take care of it." But that is not what the father had asked for. He wanted the son to go now.

Several brothers told me something very interesting. They told me, "Abraham, to do evangelism is not so easy anymore as it was a few years ago. Not so many people come to our meetings. Not so many people are repenting of their sins. People have already heard about Jesus and people have already read a tract." Brothers and sisters, it might be true. People's spiritual response may gradually be decreasing. What does that mean? It means that you can't wait to start a whole bunch of churches till five years from now, because there won't



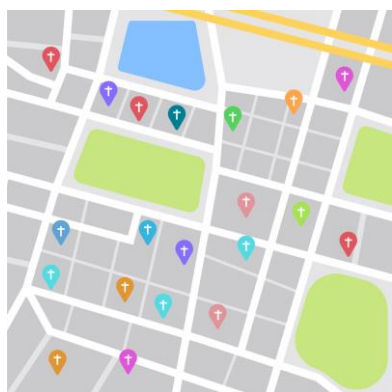
be any unbelievers interested in being saved. If you have cities without churches, you have to do it now! If you want to conquer your province, you need to do it now! There are no excuses. There is no better time than today!

We need to do it this year. This year, here in your province you need to establish your ministry firmly. I believe in some other areas the ministry is so strong that the church can't go on without it now. Some other places are in different stages. This is the year to establish your ministry. This is the year to accomplish something with your students. Your students need to go. I still remember that some church leaders asked me, "Why do we need to study the Bible? If I will study the Bible, what will it mean to me? How will it help me? How will it help my family? What will it do for my church?" What great needs still exist! Students need to go and share God's Word both in evangelism and disciple making.

IV. CONQUER THE WHOLE LAND!

Every province still needs many new churches. There are around 2000 Baptist churches in Ukraine, and through the local church discipling ministry we would like to see 2000 more. Oh, what a goal! What a challenge! What an opportunity! But it needs to be begun today. I need to tell you today and you need to make your plan tomorrow. Your mentoring coach needs to know about it the day after tomorrow and his students a day later. That's how it takes time and how people will begin to pray together. You all know the Bible verse 'Behold, today is the day of Salvation.' It's *today*.

You have already been working in many places. While others were thinking, praying, hoping, making plans and



having discussions, you already did it. New Life for Churches has had more students in the country than all other Christian education groups combined, but the whole land needs to be conquered. The New Life vision is for each and every local church to have a group of leaders led and trained by a pastor. The vision is for a church in each and every city and a group of believers in each and every village. Do you have such a vision?

I believe this is the year for us to do the work in Ukraine. We've entered the land. We've come out of difficulties. We've possessed the land. We are in most of places of the country. We have had great success. Church-based leadership training now exists in many places. But what do we read in the book of Judges? They did not conquer the land **totally**. They started living with their enemies. They made compromises. They took some good ideas and some old ideas. They said, "Oh, we know Abraham Bible said that, but we are used to doing it this way." Or, "I am

convinced the Bible teaches that, but if I do this then the pastor will dismiss me. We can just do it this way." They accepted second best, and the blessings left. The final victory was postponed for many, many years. The whole land was not conquered, and it was constantly at war. It wasn't until the time of king David that they finally did what God wanted to be done a long time before. Because of David's faith and sacrifice, he conquered the whole land and peace came. God is still looking for Davids.

Brothers, if you conquer the land, divisions and arguments will stop in your denomination. Under David the whole nation of Israel was united. They stopped fighting and killing each other. And there are many other blessings that the Lord wants to give. But don't wait till you have perfect unity to start. Don't accept any excuses that will postpone starting now. You don't need the Lord's blessings when you are not doing anything. So **start conquering now**, and the Lord will bless.

V. DO IT THROUGH YOUR MIGHTY MEN

The task is thrilling, but huge. I cannot do all the ministry alone. If I can help a big group like you, that's already wonderful. You also cannot do all the work alone. We must get others involved.

One of the things Moses did was prepare a disciple. He prepared Joshua. Moses brought people out and then died. His disciple brought them in. But his disciple forgot something. He did not disciple the next leader. When Joshua died, the generation after him was without a leader, and their successes ceased.

You, the present leaders, need to mentor men whom God will raise up to become the new prophet-type leaders of the future. We need special and unique future leaders in the denomination just like the Old Testament prophets. They were God's real spokesmen.

Jesus personally raised up the new leaders He needed for His church and to carry on this spiritual warfare. Likewise Peter and Paul and others personally raised up a specific prospective set of young men to become the

new generation of spiritual church leaders. They expected them to become the very key future spiritual leaders who would carry on the spiritual warfare and lead the church into the next century. Is your name Peter or Paul? Are there a number of young church leaders that long to be with you and **learn both humility and heroism** from you? They conquered the world, would you like to conquer your nation?

Who are these people I'm talking about? The next-door neighbor boy? The tallest member of your choir? No, I have in mind a different group of people. Those you are working with already and whom you should be making more of—discipleship group coaches.

A. Make Discipling Coaches Successful

Let's look at Mark 13:34. "It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task."

What do I want to take from this story? Notice that in this verse, the man who was going away gave individual instructions. What do I like to do? What do you like to do? We like to address the whole group! As leaders, we can look at our notes and think, "Oh, God gave us the right kind of people. We already know about these people. They are not new people. They have a record. We know they are already faithful. They know me and they know our goals, so they should be able to figure out what they need to do." The man in the parable didn't do it that way. He made sure each person knew exactly what was expected of him. That's what you need to learn to do. Make individuals successful. Make every coach successful.



Every coach has his own problems. Every one ministers in a different region in your province. Every person has his own character. There are not two the same. He has his individual character and he has his specific ministry. He has special problems, like difficulties with travel, or whatever they might be. Satan is going to attack him individually. There may be wonderful successes in the south, but he is being attacked by Satan in the north. We need to learn what that individual's strong points are and what his weak points are. Then we need to help him become a champion.

Like the prophets and apostles, it is our responsibility to give light to another person. To give the fire inside! To train him so he can be successful. You have had many lectures already. You have the lecture on how to lead a small group discussion. Have you discussed that with each coach individually? Have you checked to make sure he understands it? Does he really know how to use that material? Does he feel confident? Or when you go your way does he say, "What am I supposed to do now?" Simply burying your coaches in a pile of good material isn't enough. You can't simply dump a load of good ideas on him and expect him to go and do the right thing. To conquer the whole land you must individually make him into a mighty man, like David's mighty men of old. He knew each man individually by name and knew his strengths.

B. Help Coaches Stand Firm

Let's look at 1 Corinthians 15:58: "*Therefore my dear brothers 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.*" The apostle Paul has just spent a whole letter giving the Corinthian brothers spiritual input. Now, in conclusion of all that he has written, he says, "**Stand firm!**" He only uses two words. 'Stand firm!' He doesn't need to say a lot. Everybody knows what it means. We all know what it means. He used only two words and concretely told us what we need to do. He said: Let nothing move you. Apparently he thought something was going to come along and try to move them. When something comes along what's your reaction? Often we're already sprinting away before the words "Oh no!" have even left our mouths. Paul said "**Stand firm! Let nothing move you.**" When something comes up, instead of giving in, you stand firm and say, "Now wait a minute! What's this?"

I remember a time when I was in the capital and I wanted to cross the street. But I couldn't; the cars kept coming and coming. The light was for us, but the cars kept coming anyway, so we couldn't cross the street. I wanted to go across and the light was green for us but the cars were coming. I finally got tired of waiting. I decided, "It's my turn now," and I started crossing the street. Cars screeched to a halt and one stopped within inches of my legs. The driver opened the door and yelled, "What's the matter with you!" I didn't say anything to him, but I turned to the others who had been waiting with me and said, "Come on, the light is green."



The apostle Paul warns us that there will always be problems. There will be arguments. There will be misunderstandings. There will be opposition. There will be slander. We will always face these struggles. So what does Paul tell us to do? Does he say, "When you have a problem like that, pray about it"? Or, "You'd better counsel each other." Or, "Maybe you should make a new plan." No!!! That's not what he said. What does he say? He says, "Always give yourself fully to the Lord's work." This is the secret: do the complete work of God. Don't get sidetracked with all the little problems. Don't spend a lot of time on the little things. Don't let them disturb your peace.

One aspect of the fruit of the Spirit is peace. There is someone out there who doesn't want you to have that aspect. But you can just say to satan, "I'm sorry that's your problem. I've got it, and I will be keeping it." You will keep the peace and you will concentrate on the work. You will give yourself completely to do this work. It's a very important verse. So stand strong! Don't let anything move you and give yourself completely to do the work.

Now I'm not just sharing this for your benefit. You need to communicate that command to your. They need to know that that is their responsibility. They need to understand they are not just to be hirelings but be **shepherds** themselves. The Bible says that when the wolf or the bear comes, the hireling runs away. When a problem or difficulty arrives, a hireling shrugs and walks away. Brothers and sisters, our need is to train good people who will do a super job. We need brothers and sisters who do super quality work. God has given me the responsibility to make you successful. He has given you the responsibility to make your coaches successful.

CONCLUSION

In closing I want to ask you this question: when you look through your whole Bible, what does it talk about? Almost always about the leaders. In Old Testament it is kings, generals or priests. In the New Testament it is the church leaders. A leader is like a radio station's clock. That clock is actually much more important than our own watches because we set our watches by the radio station's clock. So, too, with the character of a leader—he sets the pace by his own standards of conduct. Brothers and sisters, everything depends on leadership. It depends on me. It depends on you. And it depends on the other leaders you will make successful. All the messages the prophets and the apostles gave, they gave to the leaders of the people. Their messages always contained one theme: Don't draw back but advance, and blessing will come from God. If you will do this now, this will become your very best year. This is my hope for you. Be sure you advance. Set a conquering pace!

Take 100 men who love no one but God and who hate nothing but sin, and you will change the face of our nation.

- Don't draw back in the face of struggles.
- Advance now.
- Know that blessings will come.

Amen, may it be so. Let us pray for the creation of a spiritual country. God bless you!

Blessings to you, our dear friends!

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