

AMONG THE LENTILS

“The Genesis: Stand Firm”

The enemy in the distance, gathering together at their camp, their numbers quickly swell. As they grow, so does the clamor of the people in your camp; conversations and prayers begin to intensify. Your distant enemy shuffles and changes formation. The moment has come. The trumpet sounds, alarm is raised, and your enemy begins towards you in a thunderous march. Their armor and weaponry glinting in the sun; dazzling sparks, even before the clashing of metal begins. Senses sharpen and focus tightens as you prepare to meet your rivals. Their goal: your utter destruction in service of their god! Your goal: the defense of the honor of your God and your king! As the field shrinks before your eyes, you feel the vibrations beginning to rumble under your feet from the heavy treading.

As your adrenaline surges within, something quite unexpectedly beseeches your attention. You hear and feel many footsteps quite close to you! Have you been out flanked?! As you turn to investigate the commotion, you notice that your own army - the LORD's army! - is retreating with the utmost of fervency! They are fleeing from your greatest foe; indeed, they are tucking tail in the face of your archenemies!

What now, will you do? What is your next move? Are you staying with your company and fleeing for the higher ground, or are you standing firm against seemingly insurmountable odds?

For Shammah, and the other Mighty Men of David, there was no question as to what needed to be done. Retreat was not an option! Shammah took his stand on a lentil plot of land in the field and proceeded to decimate the onslaught of every single man that dared to enter into his reach! We see this great feat, this epic scene, this 300 level stance, play out in only two verses of Scripture!

2 Samuel 23.11-12:

¹¹ And next to him was Shammah, the son of Agee the Hararite. The Philistines gathered together at Lehi, where there was a plot of ground full of lentils, and the men fled from the Philistines. ¹² But he took his stand in the midst of the plot and defended it and struck down the Philistines, and the LORD worked a great victory. (English Standard Version)

My Plot of Lentils

Shammah, and the other Mighty Men of David, are my current life inspiration and the spark for this new blog. You see, on the professional side of my life, I've decided to take a stand in the plot of lentils! I have decided to leave the W2 workforce that I have known my entire professional life and decided to become a self-employed Benefits Consultant. I am working with a large company, but the business that I build is completely in my hands and dependent upon my work ethic; no one is going to hold my hand and walk me into the field of success after the victory is already won. And likewise, retreat means failure... No, I must stand and fight, and the fervor that is brewing being on this battlefield is carrying-over into other parts of my life as well.

I do recognize the fact that the courage it takes to do what I am doing does not compare with the Mighty Men of David and the courage they displayed day-in and day-out. However, there are a couple of reasons I am using this analogy:

1. No matter what the level of courage that is needed, or the field of battle that we find our feet in, the point is utilizing this courage to stand firm and defend our plot when it's time to fight! Like in the story of David, there are times to flee from the Saul's we may face and hide ourselves until the *proper time*, but there are also moments when it is time to stand firm! I pray for the wisdom to know the difference and be prepared to act accordingly. What I know is that today, at this moment, it is time for me to stand firm!
2. I just recently finished again reading the story of David and his Mighty Men for the annual Bible reading plan I am working through. While working through this portion of Scripture, I also started reading a book titled *Chase the Lion* by Mark Batterson which highlights many of these stories of David's men and how they inspired the author's spiritual and professional walk. Thus, these two things were coinciding in a way that certainly caught my attention, while at the same time, I have been in the process of making this mental and spiritual switch in my own life. As such, I want to mark this moment in my walk with God with this blog.

The Set Up

A few other reasons I would like to pursue this blog, and what should you expect from it, are as follows:

- Personally, this blog will serve as a journal for my growth through the lens of my professional life as I develop this new business. It will be a place to categorize what God is doing in this area of my life. It will also be a place for me to share with you about what I am learning as I stand in my plot of lentils in the hopes it can be a source of encouragement, insight, challenge, or refreshment to your professional and spiritual growth.
- I will be posting on a semi-monthly basis – the 1st and the 15th day of each month.
- I will, on occasion, incorporate book reviews from books regarding professional growth that I have read as well.

Beyond the Set Up: Lesson 1

Although, the focus of this first issue was to lay out the purpose and structure of this blog, it is also the first lesson that I am learning in this journey. Neither this journey, or this blog, would have even had its genesis if I hadn't taken the “leap of faith” by taking my stand on this ground!

→ **Lesson: Stand firm & fight!**

I don't know where you are today in your walk. I don't know where God has you. I don't know if it's time for you to stand firm and fight or if this is season of being in the cave like David, avoiding Saul. The point is, we go through different seasons and even when we are walking together as brothers, we still may find ourselves in different places. If you find yourself in that cave, the only thing I want to encourage you with, which is what I am learning about myself in too many areas, is to be *certain* this is where God has placed you and that you are not *hiding in a cave of your own excuses*. I have done this much too long in my life, thinking it is where God has placed me. When I face the truth of it however, it is where I placed myself and then convinced myself it's where He placed me.

It’s a wonderful truth that He works all things out for good to those who love Him, but it doesn’t mean we need to stay in the wrong place! Just consider and pray if this is the right time!

I’m sure you have often heard the importance of knowing your “why”. I do agree with this! After all, Proverbs 29.18 states: “Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.” (ESV) When we do not have a clear vision and purpose before us, it causes us to get off track! It was my why that spurred me to take my stand in my plot of lentils. You see, trying to do better for my family is certainly high on my why list, but it doesn’t take the top spot. What takes my top spot is honoring God. As such, I took this new position to ensure I would no longer work weekends, and have more flexibility in my schedule, in order to honor all of God’s Sabbaths! Thus, my initial reason for planting myself with these lentils was to honor Him. Now, as He give me strength to befall the enemies within my grasp, my fervor behind my why is intensifying!

So, I implore you, do not waste time like I did! If you have the opportunity to pursue a God-honoring dream, or a way to better obey Him and expand the reality of His Kingdom, then take your stand with all you have! Fight for your life and for that “why” that is in you. It begins with taking that stand! What follows is much practice, learning and work! You must give it all you have and trust that you will not be in that field alone. Find your Band of Brothers to stand in that same field with you; surround yourself with like-minded people who will not allow you retreat when it gets tough! Remember how this story introduced Shammah. The verse said, “And next to him...” Even though the army retreated, the Mighty Men did not! Shammah displayed an incredible amount of courage and bravery and may have been in that plot of lentils by himself, but his brothers were nearby! Who are you with? If they are not challenging you to step up and stand firm where it truly matters most – standing firm in righteousness versus comfort! – you need to press on!

Most importantly, pursue God! If you truly desire and pursue Him, He will stand with you even when it seems like no one else is! Remember though, if you desire for Him to stand with you, you must stand with Him!

So, join me on this journey! Let us stand, grow and build together! I’ll see you back in two weeks.

Blessings to you and yours!

Ephesians 6.13 - "Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm." (ESV)

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