It’s time to Dream AGAIN

Rod Parsley
Dream Again

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Introduction

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Throughout history, men and women whose destinies should have been sealed by defeat and discouragement have confounded critics, astonished adversaries and staggered family and friends as they stood valiant in victory formed in the crucible of conflict originally designed to cause their ultimate demise.

Held in high esteem only among the excommunicated, the eccentric and the extreme, these exiles of society hope against hope and believe beyond belief in order to accomplish their highest aspirations in life. The kind of men and women I am talking about are not born. They are built by their battles, formed by their failures and
promoted by their persecutions. The late, great Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said the true measure of the stature of such a man or woman is not how they stand in times of comfort and convenience, but whether or not they still stand in times of challenge and controversy.

Watch the apostle Peter cower in fear and deny his Lord three times, but he learned to dream again. He stood up after his restoration and said, “You can’t take my dream.” God made him the greatest evangelist of a generation. He preached the first evangelistic crusade of the infant church and saw five thousand men and women give their lives to Jesus Christ.

There are many other examples. Look at the apostle Paul, shipwrecked, snake bitten, stoned and left for dead, and yet he wrote two-thirds of the New Testament. John, the beloved disciple, was boiled in blistering oil, not once
or twice, but three times. Banish him to the island of Patmos, and on the Lord’s Day he will hear the voice of many waters giving him the greatest revelation of Jesus of Nazareth ever received by mortal man.

Lead a rejected carpenter’s son, kicked and prodded, beaten and bruised through the cobblestone streets of Jerusalem, but don’t write your story about Him on Friday, because two sunrises later, He’s about to dream again.

After nails have parted sinews and flesh, bury Him in a borrowed tomb, but the third day He will break death’s bands asunder and be resurrected to become the first begotten of the dead.

Crush his dream by confining him to a Bedford prison cell for crimes against the religious rulers of his day, but
in that dark, dark cell, John Bunyan will dream again and write one of the greatest epic literary works ever known to man, called *The Pilgrim’s Progress*.

Silence the American dream in his heart. Strand him in the snowy drifts of Valley Forge. He was down, that is certain, but he made the decision to not be out, and he became the father of our nation. I’m talking, of course, about General George Washington.

Tell him, repeatedly and insistently, that he has no right to dream. Raise him in abject poverty. Let him suffer great personal and professional loss, to the point of despair, but Abraham Lincoln will decide to dream again. He broke the chains of slavery, preserved the union and set a nation free.
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Strike him down with infantile paralysis, but he would not stay down. Franklin Delano Roosevelt decided he would become the leader of the free world from his wheelchair. He marshaled the resources to defeat the enemies of freedom.

The examples from history go on and on.

Burn his legs so severely at the age of eight that doctors said he would never walk again, but Glenn Cunningham will become an Olympic medalist, and set speed records running the mile event that would last for years.

Strip him of his dreams of melody, harmony and symphony by cursing him with deafness, and somehow Ludwig van Beethoven will become the only deaf composer to stagger the world with his work.
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Let him be born black, during a time of racial injustice and fierce discrimination. Subject him to the vilest of slanders, ridicule and rejection, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. will speak to thousands assembled at the Washington Mall and declare, “I have a dream!”

Label him a slow learner, a mental defective, retarded. Write him off as uneducable, but Albert Einstein will dream again and change the world with his theory of relativity, and become a name recognized around the globe.

Sentence him to prison for his conscientious objection to the war in Europe, but Howard Carter, while imprisoned, received a revelation of the nine manifestation gifts of the Holy Spirit that would bless the world.
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Torment him with tuberculosis, and condemn him to death as a seventeen-year-old. Sign his death certificate while he is still breathing. But on that dark night, with death hovering at the door, that teenager, in the midst of a fitful sleep, had a dream. On one side he saw a coffin, and on the other side, a Bible. Lester Sumrall chose the Bible as he dreamed again, and rose up healed by God’s power, and preached the gospel to the nations for more than sixty years.

These people, and many others like them, are inspired by the words impossible, incurable and insufferable. They are not great because they never failed, but because they refused to quit and made the decision that it was time to dream again.

How about you? What is it that looms so large in your life that you became intimidated and gave up on your
dream? What convinced you that you could not do what God created you to do? Who coerced you, or abused you, or lied to you, or deceived you into thinking that your dream was dead, your purpose was beyond hope and that your life was over, with no chance of fulfillment, satisfaction or happiness?

I have good news for you. It’s time to dream again.
Down But Not Out

How futile their hopes must have seemed. Removed more than a generation before by a Babylonian empire that had destroyed their nation, their capital and their Temple, the children of Israel were resigned to living and dying as exiles, far from their ancestral home. Those who held out any inclination to one day return were regarded as delusional.

The nonconformists must have felt great pressure to give up their desire for restoration, and to just get on with their ordinary lives in the country of their captivity.
Bondage was a daily routine, while freedom remained nothing more than a mocking dream.

While many settled for mediocrity, some dared to dream again. In a stunning development, the seemingly impregnable city of Babylon was overthrown by the Medes and the Persians, and a man named Cyrus came to power. He was the king, named many years before by Isaiah the prophet, who would issue the decree enabling the Jewish captives to return to their native land and rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple.

Psalm 126:1-3 says:

*When the LORD restored the captives of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. Then they said among the nations, “The LORD has*
done great things for them.” The L ORD has done great things for us; we are glad.

Some Bible scholars attribute the authorship of Psalm 126 to Ezra, reasoning that the most likely restoration of the captives of Zion was from seventy years of Babylonian exile. Even by modern measures, seventy years is most of a lifetime; and in those days, it would have seemed like forever. And yet, after seventy long years of dispersal and delay, all those who wanted to do so were free to return. It was a dream — but it had come true.

Psalm 126 says, When the Lord restored the captives... It was not a matter of whether or not God would do it — He always intended the restoration of Israel to their land of promise. Another way of saying it is, “When God restored their fortunes...”
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It was not just about money. It was about giving them a new opportunity to live according to His will. It was about fulfilling His purpose. It was about new life.

The Only Way Out Is Straight Up

You may be down, but you are not out. Your situation may look dark, but there is no need for you to be afraid of the darkness. When you are down but not out, the pit is the very place that is designed for you. When you can’t get any lower than you are right now, and there is nobody else around to help you, then you will realize that the only way out is straight up. God will deliver you by His mighty hand!

There were those among the captives who wanted to start a rebellion against their captors. The prophets warned against doing so. One reason is that rebels would
have been annihilated. The other is that when God brought them out, man would not get any glory for their deliverance. That belonged to God alone.

God doesn’t need your help; He wants your praise. He desires your adoration and worship. He is no less God when you are going through the circumstance than He is when He has brought you out of it. It may seem like your deliverance is no closer than it was before, but go ahead and praise God anyhow.

You don’t realize it, but He has already put a plan into motion that will result in your freedom from every force that tries to keep you bound. All He wants is for you to bless Him for it, before you can see any evidence of it.

For seven dreary decades, Israel had been in captivity, but along came Cyrus, who overthrew the Babylonian
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defenses, and uttered a decree that the Jews could return home, start new lives, rebuild their city and their Temple, and worship God freely once again!

Psalm 126:2 says, *Then they said among the nations, “The LORD has done great things for them.”* Everyone in the nations surrounding them knew that none other than the God of Israel, the Creator of heaven and earth, did this for them. God was celebrated when His people were liberated.

Ezra 2:14 lists the children of Asaph, the singers, as those who returned to Zion, along with many others. Asaph was one of the leaders of Temple worship, appointed by King David. Asaph’s descendants were of the same craft. A new sound was about to break forth on Temple Mount — the sound of praise to God. Those who dared to dream again had reason to rejoice again.
Do Not Give Up On Your Dream

Many of you have suffered what may seem like irreparable defeat from the schemes of a relentless and pitiless adversary. But don’t be afraid when the lights go out. You dream in the dark, and it’s time for you to dream again.

In the first year, the creator of Coca-Cola did not sell enough of his product to even cover his advertising costs. But he did not stop — he dreamed again. Today, Coke products are served an estimated 1.9 billion times each day globally.

Michael Jordan was cut from his high school basketball team. But he did not quit playing — he dreamed again, and is the career NBA scoring average record holder, at 30.1 points per game.
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Theodore Geisel had his first manuscript rejected by dozens of different publishing companies. He refused to be refused, and dreamed again. Finally an independent publishing house took a chance on the new author, and his first book went into print. Its title was *And To Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*. The author and illustrator is better known as Dr. Seuss, and he published over 60 books that have sold over 600 million copies worldwide.

Your Bible is full of examples of people who were down, and even counted out by those around them, but they refused to give in to the pressures and problems that confronted them. I believe God is about to give you an out of season miracle. He is greater than we have perceived, greater than we have conceived, and even greater than we have believed.
God is not limited to our ability to trust Him. The only thing that is impossible with God is for Him to do nothing. The man with the tormented son cried out in Mark 9:24: “Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief!” Jesus responded by setting his son free from a lifetime of bondage.

Satan’s attack is nothing more than an opportunity for God to advance in your life and to advance you. It may have been a long time coming, but God has a right now word for you that will transform you and transport you beyond every boundary. It may look like it’s the wrong time, but God will always be right on time.

So many people have wondered when their answer was going to come, because darkness seemed to be closing in all around them. But I have good news for you — you dream in the dark. Don’t be afraid of the dark —
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Jesus wasn’t. He got up in the dark. When the women approached the tomb very early in the morning, He had already been resurrected and was gone.

From the Pit to the Palace

Joseph’s example is one that has encouraged me again and again over the years. He had the promise of a palace, but was betrayed by his brothers and thrown into a pit. It must have been dark down there, but he was sustained by a dream God had given him. No doubt he thought about it often from the pit to Potiphar’s house, then to prison, and finally to the fulfillment of his purpose.

It took thirteen years for the dream to come to pass, but the reward was worth the wait — and the fulfillment of the dream had to do with far more than Joseph alone.
It was God’s intention to position him to save his entire family.

Joseph’s name, given to him by his mother Rachel, means adding. God certainly added to him in many ways during his long and notable life. When he was elevated in the land of Egypt, he was given a new name: Zaphnath-Panaeah, which means to speak as God. As prime minister over the entire nation, when Joseph spoke, it was not a suggestion, and not subject to debate. His word was law.

When you speak God’s word in faith, it is as if God, Himself, speaks. His word carries His authority. It becomes the law of your life.

Joseph had two sons while he was in Egypt — Manasseh, which means forgetting, and Ephraim, which
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means double. Indeed, the boys had prophetic names, since Joseph forgot the pain of his past, and received the double portion of blessing from his father Jacob.

I believe that if you will let go of the pain of your past — mistakes, hurts, betrayals, wounds, abuses and all the things your adversary uses to try to hold you back — God will also give you a double portion of the blessing He has always desired you to have. But you must hold on to your dream as Joseph did, and refuse to allow the facts of your circumstances to convince you that your dream is dead.

Put on the Whole Armor of God

In order to dream again, there are two things that are absolutely necessary: endurance and perseverance. Endurance is the ability to withstand hardship, adversity and stress; to remain firm under suffering or misfortune
without yielding and without giving in. Perseverance means to persist in an undertaking in spite of contrary influences, opposition or discouragement.

Ephesians 6:10-17 says:

Finally, my brothers, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having
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your waist girded with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, having your feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace, and above all, taking the shield of faith, with which you will be able to extinguish all the fiery arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

The first step in dreaming again when you are down, but not out, is to stand. Standing is much more productive than sitting, especially when action is required.

Sitting is a contented posture. Where you sit is an indication of where you intend to stay. When you are sitting and then stand up, it indicates that you are ready to accomplish a task, begin a journey or otherwise take
necessary action which will enable you to accomplish a goal.

Paul also exhorts us to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. We are to be strong, not in ourselves, but in the Lord. We may be insufficient in strength, but there is no situation that God cannot overcome.

God is big enough to deal with whatever stands in your way. He is also strong enough to hold you together when it seems as though everything in your life is coming apart. Colossians 1:17 says, *He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.*

As the science of molecular biology continued to advance, researchers distinguished a group of proteins called laminins. This kind of protein is used to connect
cells to one another. It also happens to have the shape of a cross — a reminder that indeed, God really does hold us together.

Verse 11 admonishes us to:

*Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.*

Schemes and strategies can also be called plans. The devil has a plan to take you out — but don’t let that bother you, because God has a greater plan to keep you in.

Jeremiah 29:11 says:

*For I know the plans that I have for you, says the LORD, plans for peace and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.*
The adversary’s plan is to keep you mired in your past. God’s plan is to take you into a glorious and victorious future.

Verse 12 says:

For our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

We should not be discouraged to learn that we are in a fight. It is a fight that Jesus has already won, and He invites us to participate in His victory. While it is true that we will experience opposition, we can face it with confidence, knowing that Jesus has already prevailed, and we will as well, if we remain steadfast in our faith in
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Him. The cross was the place of God’s ultimate triumph and Satan’s ultimate demise.

Verse 13:

*Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

Resistance involves doing something — taking affirmative and energized action. We must do what we can in order to experience all God has for us. The blessings of God will not drop on our heads like ripe cherries off a tree. Doing nothing is not an option for God, and it is not an option for us.
Verse 14:

*Stand therefore, having your waist girded with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness...”*

We may be battered, but we are not bowed. We find ourselves propelled by a power greater than ourselves, compelled by an inward desire, following an infallible leader, who has irresistible power and possessing absolute truth. We will allow nothing to turn our plow.

How can we be so confident? We have exchanged our sins for His righteousness. We don’t trust in our own ability, but in His ability. We proceed in His strength and not our own.
Verse 15 says:

*...having your feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace...*

You put shoes on your feet in anticipation of going somewhere. Movement is assumed. In our case, as Christians, we should be going somewhere to bless someone.

Verse 16 says:

*...and above all, taking the shield of faith, with which you will be able to extinguish all the fiery arrows of the evil one.*

Faith in God is an indisputably important element of our lives as believers. Faith in God distinguishes us from the world around us. Others may believe in other things,
but we believe in God. Our faith enables us to overcome every accusation fueled by the flames of hell.

Verse 17 brings us to the conclusion of Paul’s admonition, with reference to the two most important characteristics of every Christian’s arsenal:

*Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

As Jesus put it when talking to Nicodemus in John, chapter 3, you must be born again. This is an application that is never exhausted nor considered out of place. You must be born again. It is the beginning of your Christian experience, and nothing else will even make sense to you until you have allowed the Spirit of God to regenerate you and make you new from the inside out.
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In addition, our offensive weapon is the sword of the Spirit, which is identified as the Word of God. This is the weapon Jesus so effectively used to turn aside every attack of the adversary in His temptation in the wilderness, recorded in Matthew chapter 4. We, too, can use the Word of God to defeat every onslaught of the devil’s lies and deception.

But this is not a sword that you hold in your hand. It is wielded in the form of words, spoken in faith out of the heart of a believer. So many times, the reason Christians experience defeat is because they are intimidated into silence by the roaring of their enemy, who is the devil.

When opposition rises, you must speak. But you cannot say just anything — in order for your words to have the necessary effect, they must be what God has already said about you. There is an affirmation in the
Bible to counteract every lie that could ever be spoken about you or your situation. By continual reading and diligent study of the Bible, you can find out what God says, and say it as well. Doing so will turn aside every falsehood and pave the way for your success.

God wants you to dream again, and then act upon your dreams. You may be down, but don’t be discouraged. Just because you are down does not mean you are out. It’s time to dream again.
Overcoming When You Are Overwhelmed

Hear my cry, O God, attend to my prayer. From the end of the earth I will cry to You; when my heart faints, lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For You have been a refuge for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. (Psalm 61:1-3)

As in several of the psalms that he authored, David begins with tearful prayer and ends with thankful praise. He is encouraged to persevere by experience and faith. As we know from our own lives, as well as from examples in
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the Bible, God will never require faith beyond our experience with Him.

David was also prompted to persevere by means of his expectation. He had experienced the saving and delivering power of God on countless occasions, and he knew God would not let him down. Hope is defined as a favorable and confident expectation, having to do with the future anticipation of good. Hope sustained him, even when circumstances aligned themselves against him.

David told God that whatever came his way, he would still put his trust in Him. He would not put his faith in someone else, but only in God. He would not run away from God during his time of trouble, but run to Him in anticipation of the help he needed. He refused to accuse God, as so many do, but would trust Him and obey Him in the middle of the most difficult of circumstances.
Overcoming When You Are Overwhelmed

David had the same attitude as Jacob did so many years before when he encountered God: “I will not let you go until you bless me.”

The phrase, “From the end of the earth” is instructive. David recognized that no matter where he was, he had access to God. There was no place he could go that was outside God’s care and covering. There was no need represented in his life that was beyond God’s ability to correct.

Prayer Must Be Our First Response

David was not too overwhelmed to pray, but he prayed because he was overwhelmed. Prayer must never be our last resort in an extremity, but our first response to every emergency. Weeping must quicken prayer, not kill it. James 5:13 asks this rhetorical question: “Is
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anyone among you suffering? Let him pray.” There is no distinction made as to what the suffering is about or what has caused it. The remedy given in the Bible is to take the matter to prayer.

David goes on to say, “For You have been a refuge for me, and a strong tower from the enemy.” His name is as strong as it has ever been, and He will never fail you nor forsake you. You can depend upon Him when trouble comes. He will hide you from the onslaught that threatens to overwhelm you.

David was not just having a bad day, or in need of some rest for his physical body. He was dealing with weariness of spirit, and that is something that will deplete you regardless of how well you are feeling physically. Proverbs 18:14 says, The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?
Some studies estimate that one person in five are depressed. There may be many reasons that people experience depression, but I want to focus on just one of them: sometimes depression occurs because people are involved in something they know they shouldn’t be doing. This inevitably creates a conflict inside them that can’t be resolved by anything other than repentance.

2 Samuel 11:1-6 says:

*In the spring of the year, the time when the kings go out to battle, David sent out Joab and his officers, all of Israel with him. They brought to ruin the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah, but David remained in Jerusalem.*
One evening when David arose from his bed and was walking on the roof of the king’s house, from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. So, David sent someone to inquire about the woman. And it was asked, “Is this not Bathsheba the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?” So David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her. When she had purified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house. The woman conceived. So she sent a message and reported to David, “I am pregnant.”

Then David sent an order to Joab, “Send Uriah the Hittite to me.” So, Joab sent Uriah to David.

David’s scheme to get Uriah to go to his house was unsuccessful, and, desperately needing to cover up his
sin, David resorted to an unconscionable betrayal of a loyal soldier, who had acted more honorably than anyone else in this entire narrative.

We continue the story in verses 14-17:

*That morning, David wrote a message to Joab and sent it by way of Uriah. He wrote in the message, “Send Uriah to the front of the line where the fighting is heaviest then withdraw from him, so that he may be struck down and die.”*

*So as Joab was besieging the city, he stationed Uriah in a place where he knew fierce men were. When the men of the city came out, they fought with Joab, and some people among those who served David fell; Uriah the Hittite died among them.*
Bad Actions Have Consequences

When David found out that his plan to kill Uriah had succeeded, he thought that all obstacles were removed and that he could cover up his sin by marrying Uriah’s widow. It was not to be.

God sent Nathan the prophet to David, who confronted him and rebuked him for his sin — actually, his sins — including covetousness, lying, adultery and murder. David’s response was immediate. He did not try to deny the truth, blame others or make excuses for his iniquity. He repented. He said, very simply and straightforwardly, “I have sinned against the Lord.”

God very graciously spared David the death penalty, but that does not mean there were no consequences to his actions. Nathan told David that the sword would never
depart from David’s household, and the child conceived by his arrogance, lust and lack of self-control would die.

David was elevated to the throne by the mighty hand of God, and he had fallen. He fell short of the standard of righteousness that God expected of everyone, but especially of kings.

Romans 3:23 says:

_For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God..._

It’s not a matter of whether people fall — it is only a matter of when. The thing that defines us as humans is not that we fall. Everyone does. The thing that defines us and determines our future is whether or not we will get up after we fall.
The child died after seven days. It was a grievous blow. David realized that the baby was dead, and had a decision to make. He could continue in a posture of mourning, or he could get up from his position of supplication and fasting on the floor and move on with his life.

He was no doubt overwhelmed with sorrow, especially since he knew that it was his own sin that caused all the trouble. But he refused to sit in the dust any longer, distraught, depressed and discouraged. He decided to overcome, even though he was overwhelmed.

**David’s Eight Steps to Victory**

There are eight decisions David made that enabled him to overcome, shown in 2 Samuel 12: 20-24:
So David arose from the ground, washed, anointed himself, and changed his garments. Then he entered the house of the LORD and worshipped. He then went in to his own house. When he asked, they set down food for him and ate.

His servants said to him, “What is this thing you have done? You fasted and wept for the sake of the living child, but when the child died, you arose and ate food.”

He explained, “As long as the child was alive, I fasted and wept because I thought, ‘Who knows? The LORD may be gracious to me, so that the child may live.’ But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Am I able to bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me.”
Then David comforted Bathsheba, his wife. He went to her and lay with her, so that she conceived a son. They named him Solomon, and the LORD loved him.

**Step 1**

First, to dream again, David arose from the ground. Prostrating oneself before God is the proper position for repentance, but once that has been accomplished, it is time to get up. No progress can be made by staying prostrate. When the prodigal son realized he needed to return to his father’s house, he said “I will arise...” He had to have the willingness to get up. Nobody was going to come and carry him back to his father — he had to get up. So do you.
You cannot let your condition determine your position. You are not the sum total of all the lies all your enemies have repeated about you. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you are the righteousness of God. You must rise above your flesh, refuse to attend the pity party, and reject what other people may think about you. My pastor and mentor, Dr. Lester Sumrall, said, “Other people’s heads are a bad place to keep your happiness.”

Here is another important consideration: you must forgive yourself. If God is willing to forgive you (and He is) you must be willing to do the same. Romans 5:20 says, “...where sin increased, grace abounded much more...” Allow the grace of God to abound toward you. Yes, you messed up, and you have admitted it and repented of it. Now get up.
Second, David washed himself. Mourners in ancient Israel would neither wash nor anoint themselves with oil. But when the period of mourning was over, they applied both the water and the oil. This reminds me of John 17:17, where Jesus said, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.” The only thing that can sanctify (or separate) you from the mess you have made is the Word of God.

Ephesians 5:26 says, “...that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word...” God cleanses us, or washes us, with His Word. But in order for us to be washed by it, we must stand under its cleansing stream — not occasionally, but daily. This is also emphasized by James 1:22-25, which says:
Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man viewing his natural face in a mirror. He views himself, and goes his way, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But whoever looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this man will be blessed in his deeds.

When you look into a natural mirror, you usually forget what you saw within a short period. A casual observer of the Word of God is the same way. That is why we need to look into the Bible, God’s Word, on a continual basis, so that it will remind us of who we really are instead of who the world says we are.
Step 3

Third, David anointed himself. Dry conditions were normal in Bible lands, and without anointing oil, skin would become dry and cracked. Not having oil on your head or face was a sure indication of mourning.

Isaiah 61:1-4 says:

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor; He has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to preserve those who mourn in Zion, to give to them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for
mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He might be glorified. They shall build the old ruins; they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.

The term “the oil of joy” has also been translated “the shining of cheerful anticipation” in other Bible versions. Anticipation is important, because as the Lord spoke to me, “The atmosphere of expectancy is the breeding ground of miracles.”

What are you expecting today — more of the same, or something radically different? God wants to anoint you with the oil of joy instead of the dryness of mourning that has sought to overcome you.
Jesus quoted Isaiah 61 when he read in the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth, recorded in Luke chapter 4. He used this passage to announce the year of Jubilee—a time when the free favors of God profusely abound. It didn’t matter that Jubilee wasn’t scheduled to appear on their calendars—Jesus said He was the Jubilee!

Nehemiah 8:10 says, “...the joy of the LORD is your strength.” If the adversary can’t steal your joy, he can’t keep your stuff. The devil is no match for a believer who is filled with the joy of the Lord, since that believer also has the strength of the Lord.

Proverbs 6:31 says:

But if he [the thief] is found, he will restore sevenfold; he will give all the substance of his house.”
The thief (the devil) will eventually leave those who are filled with God’s joy alone, lest he face total ruin.

**Step 4**

The fourth thing David did was change his apparel. It was common for ancient Israelites to rend their garments and to put on sackcloth and sit in ashes during a time of mourning. Isaiah 61:3 says that God would give “...the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness...” This has been rendered “a covering of celebration” in other translations.

This did not just involve covering the garments of mourning with a new set of clothes. Something had to be taken off before the garments of celebration could be put on. You’ll have to take off that attitude of defeat and discouragement. Take off that posture of failure. Take off
that image of lack. Take it off, so that God Himself can adorn you with garments of celebration.

Refuse to look at and regret what you’ve lost. Look at all you have remaining, and praise God for it.

Hebrews 13:15 says:

*Through Him, then, let us continually offer to God the sacrifice of praise, which is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.*

**Step 5**

The fifth thing David did was to come to the house of the Lord, not run away from it as many seem to do when a crisis arises. There is safety in God’s house, as well as every other benefit that God provides. Healing, restoration, freedom, mercy, grace, hope — all of them
are in abundant supply in the house of God. The very first words Jesus spoke from the cross were regarding forgiveness for those who crucified Him.

You will find a different perspective on your problem when you come to God’s house. He will help you look at things from the standpoint of “nothing is possible” to “all things are possible.”

**Step 6**

The sixth thing David did was to begin to worship. He didn’t just praise God for all He had done, but David began to worship God for who He was. Worship involves a greater degree of humility before God, and a greater degree of intimacy with God.
Dream Again

When we draw near to God in worship, we can see clearly the seven exchanges that are made at the cross. I explain all of these in detail in my book The Cross: One Man...One Tree...One Friday..., but I want to give them to you here.

At the cross, we exchange: our sinfulness for His righteousness; our shame for His glory; our curse for His blessing; our brokenness for His healing; our poverty for His abundance; our rejection for His acceptance; and finally, our death for His life. Who wouldn’t want to make an exchange like that?

Step 7

The seventh thing David did was refuse to rehearse the past. He didn’t talk about his past failures, disappointments, mistakes and other issues that would
try to keep him from achieving the future God had planned for him.

The term “rehearsal” is important. A rehearsal is something that people conduct in order to perfect a repeat performance. You plan to do what you rehearse over again. If all you talk about is failure, you are planning a repeat performance — of failure! In order to change your future, you must change the words you are speaking right now. If you want a changed future instead of just a prolonged present, change your words. Words have power, and you can use that power for your good.

Step 8

The eighth thing David did was to recognize that a new beginning was necessary. In the process of time, Solomon was born. In fact, the world’s wisest man,
Dream Again

David’s successor to the throne, was birthed from David’s greatest mistake. Your mistake can become the mechanism of your deliverance.

Look Forward to the Promise in Front of You

Joseph’s brothers sold him to some Ishmaelite traders. His own blood relatives put him into a pit, but those who at times considered themselves Israel’s enemies got him out of it.

Psalm 110:1 says:

*The LORD said to my lord, “Sit at My right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”*

After thirteen years of struggle, Joseph watched the dream God gave him come to pass as his brothers, who
Overcoming When You Are Overwhelmed

tried to kill him years before, bowed themselves at his feet.

David was devastated by the death of his baby. No doubt Bathsheba was, too. But their next baby was Solomon. When the promise in front of you becomes bigger than the pain behind you, it’s time to dream again.
Dream On

There are times when God gives you a significant dream that propels you to a future that God has already planned for you. However, there are other occasions when the dream that foretells your victory is not yours, but is given to someone else. A dramatic example of this is found in the book of Judges, involving Gideon.

Gideon was the reluctant judge who was commissioned by God during a time of desperate need in Israel. He was threshing wheat in a winepress when the angel of the Lord appeared and called him a mighty man of valor.
He certainly didn’t appear to be a mighty man of valor — he was hiding in fear that his enemies might see him and steal what little fruit his labor could yield. Winepresses were generally in low places, and threshing floors were in high places, so the wind would blow the chaff away as the grain was tossed into the air. And he was out of place, since his very name means “feller” — not only a feller of trees, but a feller of men.

Nevertheless, the angel called him what God already said about him — that he was a mighty man of valor. Hell will always challenge you over what heaven calls you. Whatever God’s Word says about you is who you really are, regardless of what your enemies are saying.

The angel also said, “The Lord is with you.” You can take comfort in knowing that even in the darkest of nights, God will never leave you nor forsake you. He will
always be with you to deliver you. Romans 8:31 says, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” 1 John 4:4 says, “...He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”

**God Qualifies the Seemingly Unqualified**

The angel’s declaration must have seemed odd to Gideon, since he considered himself to be the last one to be picked and the least likely to succeed. But God has a long track record of qualifying those who appear to be unqualified.

The angel said that Gideon would smite the Midianites as one man. He would annihilate them so completely that they would not be able to recover. What God does, He does forever. When Jesus turned the water into wine, it never turned back into water. God wants to
do a complete and conclusive work in you and through you.

There is one more distinction I need to point out from Judges 6:34: “The Spirit of the LORD enveloped Gideon.” That doesn’t convey the totality of what happened. The Holy Spirit didn’t just come upon Gideon, as though Gideon put on a coat. The original language here says that the Spirit of God wore Gideon — that is, He wrapped Gideon around Him. He was now empowered to do the exploits for which God had chosen him.

Judges 7:1-8 continues the narrative:

Then Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him got up early and set up camp at Harod Spring. There was a camp of Midianites to the north of them in the valley near
the hill of Moreh. The L ORD said to Gideon, “You have too many people with you for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel glorify themselves over Me, saying, ‘Our own power saved us.’ So now, call out so the people can hear, ‘Whoever is afraid or anxious may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.’” So twenty-two thousand from among the people turned back, and ten thousand were left.

But the L ORD said to Gideon, “There are still too many people. Bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. When I say to you, ‘This one will go with you,’ he will go with you. Everyone about whom I will say, ‘This one will not go with you,’ will not go.”
So he brought the people down to the water, and the LORD said to Gideon, “You shall set apart by himself everyone who laps the water with his tongue like dogs; likewise, everyone who kneels down to drink.” The number of those who lapped, putting their hands to their mouths, was three hundred. The rest of the people had knelt to drink water.

The LORD said to Gideon, “With three hundred men who lapped to drink, I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. All the rest of the people should go home.” So the three hundred men took provisions and ram’s horn trumpets in their hands. Gideon sent all the other Israelite men to their tents, but he kept the three hundred men.
Do Not Put God in a Box

Once Gideon had his army assembled, God began the process of reducing their ranks. This makes no sense to the natural mind — but God is not obligated to do things according to our understanding.

Gideon had 32,000 troops to withstand a host that could not be numbered, a multitude. No wonder the spring where the Israelites camped was named Harod, which means trembling. But according to God’s accounting, there are times when less is good, but what men regard as nothing is even better.

Men often take comfort in large crowds of people, assuming that more is always preferable. But Jesus never sought the crowds — although they sought Him. In fact, there were times when Jesus scattered the crowds, such
as when He told them that they would have to eat His flesh and drink His blood (see John 6). The severity of terms He used stands in stark opposition to the easy-does-it mentality of many in the church today.

We must have a sense of urgency in the perilous times in which we live. I didn’t sign up to be part of a parade — I want to be part of an army! But what we have seen in these days is similar to the decay and decline that prevailed in Gideon’s time.

Instead of conflict, there is compromise and concession. Instead of the bold proclamation of God’s decrees, there is dialogue and debate — not just among ourselves, but even with our enemies. Church leaders talk about what they can’t do and won’t be able to accomplish, leading to a truce with an implacable foe instead of
Dream On

absolute victory over every adversary, regardless of how strong they may seem.

**Idolatry and Apostasy**

Idolatry and apostasy were the prevailing conditions that produced the subjugated state of Israel during this time. They are doing the same thing today.

Idolatry always produces cowards. The fearful cannot strike any blow in the hour of battle, because they have no foundation. Fear paralyzes the arm because it unnerves the heart.

Idolatry produces cowards because they never see their false gods do anything. Cowards can be defined as those whose enemy is bigger than their God. They count their enemy and are afraid at the result. They cave in at
the first sign of opposition. They think of their own safety instead of their cause; not only that, but they inspire nothing but disorder and panic among their comrades. Fear is contagious. The fearful and fainthearted amounted to 22,000 of Gideon’s group, and they were sent home.

Apostasy produces the careless. Careless people are interested in nothing more than their own comfort and convenience and cannot be bothered to consider the needs of those around them. When an appeal is made for them to assist in any way, their actions, their words, their attitudes are summed up by this statement: “We could care less.”

When Gideon took the remaining 10,000 soldiers to the water, God instructed him to separate them by their behavior. Those who lay down on their bellies to drink were disqualified, since they were more interested in
meeting their own needs than watching and remaining aware of their surroundings while they drank. They prostrated themselves on the ground, which is a posture of mourning, not of war.

They could see themselves in the water, but they were unconcerned about what was going on around them. They were persuaded to wear the uniform, but had no passion for the fight. All but 300 were dismissed because of this.

I want to encourage you to refuse the temptation to lay down at the stream of personal satisfaction, instead of fulfilling your God-given role of watching and being on guard as a good soldier in the Lord’s army. Too many have already surrendered their weapons of the blood of Jesus, prayer, the Word of God and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and only come to church to see what they can get,
instead of determining to live as the church to see what they can give.

Be Courageous

But there is a third category of people that is identified here in the book of Judges, and that is the courageous. Gideon may have been an unlikely candidate for courageous leadership, but what is important is not how you start, but how you finish. He did his best to assemble an army that would withstand the onslaught of numberless Midianites, but God whittled his group down to only 300. These were the ones who received the supplies, the lamps, the pitchers, the trumpets and the instructions that would lead to overwhelming and absolute victory.

But there was one more critical piece of information that God wanted to give Gideon before the commence-
ment of hostilities. It involved what Gideon’s enemies were saying about him — but with a significant difference from the lies and accusations that are most common in situations such as these.

Judges 7:9-15 says:

*That night the LORD said to him, “Get up and go down into the camp, for I have given it into your hands. Yet if you are afraid to go down, then go down to the camp with Purah your servant. Listen to what they say, and afterward you will be emboldened to go down to the camp.” So he and Purah his servant went down near the edge of the camp. Now the Midianites, Amalekites, and the Kedemites covered the valley like locusts; and their camels could not be counted, for they were as numerous as grains of sand on the seashore.*
Gideon came and overheard one man who was telling his dream to another. The man said, “Listen to a dream I had. I saw a dry cake of barley bread rolling into the Midianite camp. It rolled up to a tent and struck it. It fell, turned upside down, and collapsed.”

The other man responded, “This is none other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash the Israelite. God has given Midian and the whole camp into his hands.”

When Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he worshipped, returned to the camp of Israel, and said, “Get up, for the LORD has given the Midianite camp into your hands.”
God told Gideon to go into his enemies’ camp — and told him to take a witness with him, because He was saying, in essence, “You need to hear what they’re saying, and you’re not going to believe it!”

**Whose Report Will You Believe?**

Right now there are three entities talking about you. First, God is speaking, and He is always talking about your success. Your enemy is also talking about you — and most of the time (although not always) he is talking about how he is going to overcome you, defeat you, discourage you and demean you.

But you also need to be talking. What you say gives credibility either to those who are for you or against you. What are you saying about yourself? If you agree with
what God has said, it will lead you to victory. If you rehearse what the devil has said, it will result in defeat.

But there are times, such as this incident with Gideon, that your adversary, who may look invincible, is saying and thinking something that is quite different than you might expect. Listen to the testimony of no less a witness than Ulysses S. Grant, when he was still a colonel in the Union army, commanding a regiment from Illinois moving toward his enemy’s camp:

“As we approached the brow of the hill from which it was expected we could see Harris’ camp, and possibly find his men ready formed to meet us, my heart kept getting higher and higher until it felt to me as though it was in my throat... When we reached a point from which the valley below was in full view I halted. The place where Harris had been
encamped a few days before was still there and the marks of a recent encampment were plainly visible, but the troops were gone. My heart resumed its place. It occurred to me at once that Harris had been as much afraid of me as I had been of him. This was a view of the question I had never taken before; but it was one I never forgot afterwards. From that event to the close of the war, I never experienced trepidation upon confronting an enemy... I never forgot that he had as much reason to fear my forces as I had his. The lesson was valuable.” (Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant, Vol. 1, Chapter XVIII, emphasis added)

When Gideon and his companion drew near to the Midianite camp, they heard one of the soldiers telling his
A barley cake rolled into the camp and destroyed one of the tents. The man hearing the story came to the conclusion that it meant certain defeat — for them, not for Gideon.

Gideon regarded himself as the least qualified. A barley cake was the least of food items. It was so common it was overlooked. And yet something common resulted in the rout of the greatest military force that had ever opposed Israel.

You Are Significant to God

God has given every adversary in your life a prophetic dream about you. They have seen you in a vision, and the vision is of you, even though you may consider yourself an insignificant barley cake, destroying all the might your enemy has arrayed against you.
Gideon’s name was mostly unknown in Israel, but it was well known in the camp of the Midianites. He was known among his adversaries. Your name is known in hell. The reputation you already have as a conqueror causes your enemies sleepless nights and no end of trouble. Your enemy is talking about what to do about you. I say we need to give them something to talk about!

In the contemporary church, Satan is often seen as an unstoppable foe. Nothing could be more wrong. Satan created nothing. He is not omniscient, omnipotent or omnipresent.

In Luke 10:19, Jesus said that He beheld Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Ephesians 1:21-22 says that we have been given a position far above all principality, power, might, dominion and every name that is named.
James 4:7 says that when we submit to God and resist the devil, he will flee from us. Ephesians 4:27 says that we should give the devil no place. Luke 10:17 says demons are subject to us in the name of Jesus. 1 John 3:8 says, *For this purpose the Son of God was revealed, that He might destroy the works of the devil.* The word “destroy” means to annihilate, or raze; to remove all evidence of its existence.

That’s just testimony from the New Testament. Here are some additional provisions for your victory from the Old Testament.

Exodus 15:14-16 says:

*The peoples have heard and are afraid; sorrow has taken hold on the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom were amazed; the mighty*
men of Moab, trembling takes hold of them; all the inhabitants of Canaan are melted away. Fear and dread fall upon them; by the greatness of Your arm they are as still as a stone...

Deuteronomy 2:25 says:

This day I will begin to put the dread of you and the fear of you on the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear the report of you, and shall tremble, and be in anguish because of you.

Deuteronomy 11:25 says:

No man will be able to resist you, for the LORD your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you on all the land where you shall tread, just as He has spoken to you.
Isaiah 54:17 says:

No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment, you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their vindication is from Me, says the LORD.

Joshua 2:9-11 says:

She [Rahab] said to the men, ‘I know that the LORD has given you the land, for dread from you has fallen upon us, and all the inhabitants of the land melt in terror before you. For we heard how the LORD dried up the waters of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the
Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. Our hearts melted when we heard these things, and no man had any breath in him because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on earth below.

Jeremiah 20:11 says:

But the LORD is with me as a dread mighty One. Therefore my persecutors will stumble, and will not prevail. They will be greatly ashamed, for they will not prosper. Their everlasting shame will never be forgotten.

Victory Is at Hand

Knowing that God has spoken all these things over us and is committed to our success, we can tell the devil to
dream on. God gave Gideon inside information about what his enemies were dreaming about him. They had already seen his victory — the only thing left to do was put it into motion.

They had three items at their disposal. The first was a trumpet. A trumpet was used to make a sound — in this case, a summons to conquer. You can lift up your voice like a trumpet, echoing the victory God has already declared. The second was an earthen pitcher — an empty vessel. I trust you are ready to empty yourself out so that God Himself can fill you. The third was a burning lamp. God wants you to be on fire, ablaze with the Holy Spirit infilling you, inspiring you and enabling you to do great things.

The 300 blew their trumpets, broke their vessels and released the fire that was inside them. The Midianites,
overcome with fear and confusion, panicked and went about slaughtering each other. I believe your adversary has had a dream about you, which is actually their worst nightmare. Their dream is your victory, your freedom from bondage, your health, your prosperity, the restoration of your reputation.

Tell the devil to dream on!
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rod Parsley began his ministry as an energetic 19-year-old in the backyard of his parents’ Ohio home. The fresh, “old-time gospel” approach of Parsley’s delivery immediately attracted a hungry, God-seeking audience. From the 17 people who attended Parsley’s first 1977 backyard meeting, the crowds rapidly grew.

Today, as the pastor of Columbus, Ohio’s 5,200-seat World Harvest Church, Parsley oversees Harvest Preparatory School; Valor Christian College; Bridge of Hope missions and outreach; a second campus in Elkhart, Indiana; the Center for Moral Clarity, a non-partisan Christian grassroots advocacy organization; World Harvest Ministerial Alliance; and four television programs:
About the Author

• *Breakthrough*, a daily and weekly television broadcast airing six days a week on multiple networks and cable outlets;

• *120 Live With Rod Parsley*, a monthly interview and ministry program on Word Network;

• *World Harvest Alive*, a weekly program featuring the congregation of World Harvest Church; and

• *Seriously?! With Ashton Parsley*, a weekly program airing on Word Network and featuring Pastor Rod and Mrs. Joni Parsley’s daughter.

Pastor Parsley’s message to “Raise the Standard” of spiritual intensity, moral integrity and physical purity not only extends across North America, but also spans the globe to nearly every nation via television and shortwave radio.
Dream Again

Thousands in arenas across the country and around the world experience the saving, healing and delivering message of Jesus Christ as Pastor Parsley calls people back to Bible basics.

Rod Parsley currently resides in Pickerington, Ohio, with his wife, Joni, and their two young adult children, Ashton and Austin.
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Dedicated iPastors are available online to pray with you and support you. Chat LIVE during service times, or email your needs as you watch the anointed programming on our 24/7 stream of worship and ministry from World Harvest Church.
For more information about *Breakthrough*, World Harvest Church, Valor Christian College, Harvest Preparatory School, The Center for Moral Clarity, or to receive a product list of the many books, CDs, and DVDs by Rod Parsley, write or call:

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